

# Heartburn

## Definition

- Pain or burning caused by irritation of the lower esophagus from stomach acid. The esophagus is the tube from mouth to stomach.
- Pain is located in the lower chest or upper belly
- Also, called acid indigestion

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Burning pain behind the lower part of the breastbone or the upper stomach.
- Pain is worse with lying down.
- Can cause a sour (acid) taste in the mouth. Reflux most often follows large meals.

### Causes

- Irritation of the lower esophagus by the reflux of stomach acid

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Belching is normal. So is some reflux of stomach contents when bending over.
- Heartburn is less common, perhaps 5% of children.
- It's due to stomach acid going up into the esophagus.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Antacids:

- Most often, heartburn is easily treated. Give 1 to 2 tablespoons (15 - 30 ml) of liquid antacid by mouth. You can use Mylanta or the store brand. No prescription is needed.
- If you don't have an antacid, use 2 to 3 ounces (60 - 90 ml) of milk.
- For heartburn that keeps coming back, give an antacid 1 hour before meals. Also, give a dose at bedtime. Do this for a few days.

### 3. Acid Blocking Medicines:

- Your doctor may suggest an acid blocking medicine. These drugs are called H2 blockers. No prescription is needed.
- Examples are Zantac and Pepcid.
- Give the medicine as directed.
- Stay on it for at least 2 weeks.

### 4. Prevention of Heartburn:

- Eat smaller meals. Large meals overfill the stomach.
- Avoid bedtime snacks. (Reason: Your child will be lying down soon)
- Do not eat foods that make heartburn worse. Examples are chocolate, fatty foods, spicy foods, sodas, and caffeine.
- Do not bend over during the 3 hours after meals.
- Do not wear tight clothing or belts around the waist.
- Lose weight if this is a problem.

5. **What to Expect:**

- Most often, heartburn goes away quickly with treatment.
- Heartburn also tends to come back. So, preventive measures are important.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Heartburn doesn't improve after 2 days of treatment
- Heartburn doesn't go away after 1 week of treatment
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### Pediatric Care Advice

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