

Helpful information provided by the Department of Emergency Medicine

## Indigestion

Your problem is due to indigestion. Indigestion, or heartburn, is caused by irritation in the stomach and lower esophagus by excess acid. It happens more often in people who are overweight or who have a hiatal hernia. It is frequently brought on by overeating, stress, a poor diet, and/or excess alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine. Spicy foods, fats, peppermint, chocolate, tomato products and citrus juices may also cause problems. Aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs can also lead to severe indigestion.

Symptoms include burning pain or discomfort in the lower chest and upper stomach. Often there is an acid taste in the mouth and belching. Heartburn usually starts shortly after meals. It may worsen when you lie down. **The most important part of treatment is to avoid the things you know cause trouble.** Try to eat smaller meals and do not eat within 3 hours of going to bed. If you get symptoms at night, raise the head of your bed 4-8 inches to prevent acid reflux. Avoid tight fitting clothes. **Stop smoking.**

Medical treatment includes using liquid antacids and drugs to block stomach acid secretion such as Acid, Pepcid, Tagamet, Zantac, Prilosec, or Prevacid. Medicines, which increase esophageal muscle tone such as Reglan, may also help reduce symptoms. Seek care if you are not better in 2 days.

### SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Pain, chest pressure, or pain that radiates up into your neck, arms, back, or upper abdomen.
- Difficulty swallowing, repeated vomiting, or black or bloody stools.
- Fever, fainting, difficulty breathing, or any other problems.