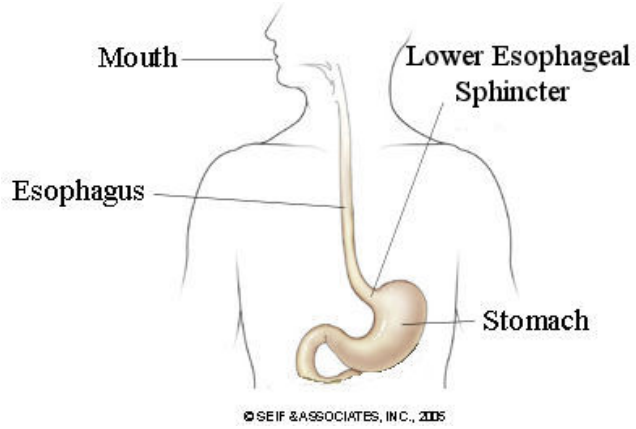
Indigestion

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 or fruit 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 to 8 inches to prevent acid reflux. One way to do this is to place a couple of books or blocks of wood under the top legs of your bed. Avoid wearing clothes that fit tightly around your chest or abdomen. **Stop smoking.**

Medical treatment includes using liquid antacids and drugs to block stomach acid secretion. Medicines which increase esophageal muscle tone 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.
- You develop difficulty swallowing, repeated vomiting or black or bloody stools.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- You develop dizziness or fainting, difficulty breathing or any other problems.

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