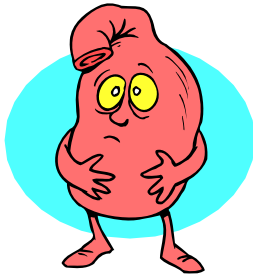


# Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development



## How to Handle Heartburn

With the holidays right around the corner, many of us will be indulging in our favorite dishes. Unfortunately, all of the tasty treats we enjoy can bring about an unwanted guest – heartburn. Here are some tips on how to handle heartburn.

### What is Heartburn?

- ♥ Also called acid indigestion, heartburn is a burning sensation in the chest.
- ♥ Heartburn can also be accompanied by acid backup in the throat, nausea, bloating and other unpleasant symptoms.
- ♥ The sphincter (ring muscles) in the lower esophagus at the entrance to the stomach usually keeps traffic moving in a southward direction, but with heartburn, the sphincter relaxes, allowing digestive juices and sometimes bits of food to move back into the esophagus and throat.
- ♥ Simple heartburn usually goes away on its own or with the help of an antacid.
- ♥ Frequent or chronic heartburn may be classified as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which is a more serious problem.

### Common Heartburn Triggers

- ♥ Too much rich food often triggers heartburn
- ♥ Fatty, fried and spicy foods can cause heartburn, as well as alcohol, coffee (including decaf), peppermint, citrus fruits, chocolate and much more
- ♥ Smoking is a major culprit

### Holiday Heartburn Triggers

- ♥ Rich sauces
- ♥ Gravies
- ♥ Desserts
- ♥ Eggnog
- ♥ Martinis
- ♥ Marbled meats
- ♥ Poultry Skin
- ♥ Creamy cheeses

### When it's Not Heartburn

- ♥ What may seem like heartburn can sometimes be a heart attack
- ♥ If you think you have heartburn but are sweaty, short of breath and are experiencing increasingly intense chest pain with pressure instead of burning, don't take any chances.
- ♥ Call 911 immediately and ask for an ambulance if you experience these symptoms.

## Heartburn Treatments

### Antacids

- ♥ Over-the-counter (OTC) antacids provide short-term relief for occasional heartburn and come in a variety of flavors and forms.
- ♥ Calcium carbonate (Tums, Calcium-rich Rolaids and generics) works well but may cause constipation and in the long term, may promote kidney stones.
- ♥ Aluminum compounds (AlternaGel, Amphogel and generics) are slower acting and may cause constipation or, at high doses, calcium depletion.
- ♥ Magnesium compounds (Maalox, Mylanta, Rolaids and generics) may act as laxatives. Overuse can cause low blood pressure or irregular heart rhythms, especially in older adults.
- ♥ Sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) is the active ingredient in fizzy antacids, such as Alka-Seltzer, and can actually cause heartburn due to the high sodium and aspirin content.

### H-2 Blockers

- ♥ Histamine antagonists (H-2 blockers) block histamine, a chemical that stimulates acid production, reducing the production of stomach acid instead of simply neutralizing it.
- ♥ Originally prescription drugs, they are now sold in smaller, OTC doses and include Zantac, Pepcid AC, Axid AR and Tagamet HB.
- ♥ It takes about 30 minutes for these drugs to begin working, so they should be taken before a meal or before a likely heartburn attack.
- ♥ Their effects last for three to five hours and you should not take them regularly for more than two weeks unless advised otherwise by your doctor.

### Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

- ♥ These heartburn drugs block the secretion of acid into the stomach by turning off acid production in certain cells.
- ♥ Available only by prescription, they include Nexium, Prevacid, Aciphex and Protonix, and should be taken 30 to 60 minutes before eating.

## Preventing Heartburn

- ♥ Extra pounds can bring on or aggravate heartburn and exercise, portion control and weight loss can help
- ♥ Do not eat within three hours of bedtime
- ♥ Avoid large meals

- ♥ Stop smoking
- ♥ Cut back on alcohol
- ♥ Avoid spicy, fatty and fried foods, or whatever you think causes your heartburn
- ♥ Do not drink milk to ease heartburn; it may feel soothing at first but can promote acid production later
- ♥ Elevate the head of your bed by putting wooden blocks under the headboard, raising it by at least four to six inches. It is important to raise your upper body, not just your head, to let gravity keep stomach acid down in your stomach. A foam wedge may also help.
- ♥ Cut back on fluids with meals
- ♥ Chew gum after meals; this stimulates saliva production, which is a good buffer to stomach acid
- ♥ Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing; tight pants and belts put pressure on the stomach

### **Wellness Resources**

*UC, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, September 2006, Volume 22, Issue 12  
National Heartburn Alliance, [www.heartburnalliance.org](http://www.heartburnalliance.org)

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