

LARYNGITIS AND SORE THROATS FROM ACID REFLUX

As many as 30% of people have a hiatal hernia or malfunctioning lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The LES is a muscular valve between the stomach and the esophagus which keeps acidic stomach contents from refluxing (going backwards) up the esophagus. When a person with acid reflux reclines for sleep, acid may travel up to the level of the throat and come into contact with the pharynx and larynx. Because acid reflux occurs during sleep, the person may be unaware that this is happening. Persons with acid reflux may experience symptoms which are direct, indirect or both.

Direct symptoms:

- Heartburn
- Acid belching

Indirect symptoms:

- Scratchy and dry sore throats
- Excessive mucus production-especially in the morning
- Throat clearing
- Chronic, irritating cough
- Husky, low pitch morning voice

Treatment Measures:

1. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, mint, citrus, carbonated beverages, vinegar based salad dressings and chocolate.
2. Eat the last meal/snack of the day no fewer than 3 hours prior to going to sleep. Try to eat the heavier meal of the day at noon and a lighter meal in the evening.
3. Use four to six inch bed blocks under the head posts of the bed. This procedure puts the entire bed on a slight downward slant from head to foot. This allows gravity to assist in keeping stomach acid where it belongs.

Medications for Acid Reflux (from strongest to weakest):

1. Prilosec, Prevacid, Nexium
2. Zantac, Pepcid, Axid, Tagament
3. Propulsid
4. Antacids such as Tums, Gaviscon

Many times multiple medications must be used to control symptoms. Medications taken 1/2 hour prior to dinner are often the most successful in treating reflux. It can often take 6 weeks to 3 months for some symptoms to resolve. Persistent symptoms may need to be treated with progressively stronger medications. Often after symptoms resolve a lower dose medication can be used to maintain a symptom free period. Occasionally it will be recommended that your esophagus be examined more closely. This can be done in a variety of ways and will be discussed more if necessary. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact the office.