

# Swallow Resource Pack

## Reflux Fact Sheet

### Management of Acid Reflux and Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GORD)

Reflux is a condition in which the stomach contents (food or liquid) leak backwards from the stomach into the oesophagus (the tube from the mouth to the stomach). This can cause several symptoms, however some people may not experience all of them. Some people are not aware they have reflux as it often occurs when they are lying down and / or asleep. It is possible to get symptoms regardless of whether you have eaten anything or not.

### Symptoms

- Sore throat/burning/dryness in the throat.
- Heartburn/ chest pain/ indigestion.
- Throat clearing or cough.
- Choking or coughing when lying down.
- Breathing difficulties e.g Asthma.
- Swallowing difficulties.
- Globus (sensation of a lump /pain / ache in throat).
- Feeling of nausea after eating.
- Bringing food back up or sensation that food is not going down / stuck.
- Excess belching.
- Sour taste in mouth / bad breath.
- Hoarse voice, especially first thing in the morning.

Oesophageal Dysmotility symptoms can mimic gastroesophageal reflux.

### What can you do to help with your symptoms

- Sometimes altering how and what you eat can help, for example:
  - Eat small & regular meals
  - Ideally leave 3 hours after eating before lying down
  - Eat slowly and in an upright position
  - Spicy, fatty, acidic foods are known to increase symptoms
  - Reduce or stop alcohol and caffeine intake
  - Limit the amount of alcohol and chocolate consumed
- Stop Smoking.
- If you are overweight, try to lose some weight.
- Raise the head of you bed, approximately 4" e.g. place a house brick under each leg at the pillow end of the bed.
- No stooping, bending from the waist, strenuous exercise after eating.

### Treatment of reflux:

Life Style changes such as those listed above can often be enough for some people.

If your symptoms persist you may wish to discuss them with your GP. Your GP may prescribe you medication such as PPI (e.g. Omeprazole, Lansoprazole, Esomeprazole); follow the dosing instructions you are given by the GP. You may also be advised to take an alginate reflux suppressant, such as Gaviscon Advance. Again, follow the dosing instructions you are given by the GP. Remember not to eat or drink anything after taking it.

## Swallowing Difficulties due to Reflux

Some people report experiencing swallowing difficulties such as a feeling of food getting stuck, food not going down, needing a drink to clear food, or it coming back up. This may be as a result of reflux, and/ or other oesophageal/gastro problems.

If you are experiencing these problems you will need to discuss this with your GP. If you are diagnosed with oesophageal problems such as oesophagitis, oesophageal stricture or dysmotility you may consider modifying the consistency of food you eat in order to ease symptoms. A soft moist diet is easy to chew and will allow the food to pass more easily through the oesophagus.

### Soft Moist Diet Examples

- Cottage Pie
- Pasta with sauce
- Mashed potato with gravy
- Cooked tender meat
- Poached/baked fish
- Eggs – boiled, poached
- Porridge, Ready Brek
- Bread softened in soup
- Cheese - cooked, grated
- Cooked soft vegetables
- Stewed Fruit
- Custard
- Soft Moist cakes
- Milk puddings
- Add gravy/sauce

If you have swallowing difficulties due to Reflux, do not eat dry, hard, chewy food such as toast, tough meat, biscuits, sandwiches, dry cereal, dried fruit, crackers, hard fruit with skins on like apples.