

LARYNGO-PHARYNGEAL REFLUX (Patient information leaflet)

WHAT IS ACID REFLUX?

Stomach juices are made up of strong digestive acids and enzymes. It is not uncommon for these juices to travel from the stomach upwards into the gullet (oesophagus) causing the symptoms of heartburn. This is referred to as Gastro- Oesophageal Reflux Disease (GORD)

Sometimes small amounts of these stomach juices can reach as far up as throat (pharynx) and voice box (larynx). This is known as Laryngo-Pharyngeal Reflux (LPR) and is sometimes called “Silent Reflux” as many people do not experience symptoms of heart burn. Acid reflux can occur during day or night, even if a person hasn’t eaten anything.



NORMAL



INFLAMMED

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

These may vary but some of the most common symptoms of LPR are:

- A sensation of food sticking or a feeling of a lump in throat.
- A hoarse, tight or croaky voice.
- Frequent throat clearing
- Difficulty swallowing (especially tablets or solid foods)
- A sore, dry and sensitive throat
- Occasional unpleasant “acid” or “bilious” taste at the back of the mouth
- A feeling that too much mucus/ phlegm is collecting in the throat.
- Sudden coughing or choking spasms at night
- Chronic cough
- Excessive burping, particularly during the day

WHAT CAUSES LPR?

Often it is not clear what causes LPR. There may be a number of underlying causes, such as problems with the stomach, the gullet or the sphincter muscle that separates the two, but, in many cases, lifestyle factors such as being overweight, smoking, too much alcohol and caffeine are probable causes. Dietary factors may also play an important role with spicy foods, fatty foods, chocolate and citrus juice contributing to symptoms of LPR in some individuals.

HOW IS LPR TREATED?

- Making lifestyle and dietary changes.
- Taking prescribed medications to reduce stomach acid.

Most patients with LPR report improvement in their symptoms within 2-3 months of treatment, but it may take 6 months or more for the throat and voice symptoms to resolve, stopping reflux medication suddenly can result in increased LPR, so gradual step down as per your doctor's advice is recommended.

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE LPR?

- Lose weight & eat healthy
- Limit intake of fried foods, spicy foods, chocolate and citrus juices.
- STOP SMOKING.
- Raise the head of your bed 4-6 inches (place blocks under legs /base not by using extra pillow).
- Leave 3 hours between eating & lying down
- Bend at the knees when you pick things up
- Wear loose clothing around your waist
- Chew gum after meals
- Eat smaller meals more regularly
- Eat slowly chewing each mouthful
- Avoid fizzy drinks and caffeine- drink water or herbal teas instead.
- Drink less alcohol.

WILL I ALWAYS NEED TREATMENT FOR LPR?

Usually LPR improves with appropriate treatment but you need to:

- Follow the recommendations given on lifestyle changes.
- Make the dietary changes that are recommended
- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor
- Consult your doctor before stopping medication

More information: www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk