

## Cooling Tips for Severe Heartburn

**G**astroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a severe case of heartburn in which food backs up from your stomach to your esophagus and throat. Almost everyone experiences it at some time. The usual symptom is heartburn, an uncomfortable burning sensation behind the breastbone, most commonly occurring after a meal. If the reflux is frequent or severe enough, it may cause more significant problems and be considered a disease. When it reaches that point, GERD isn't just "something you ate." It's a real disease and a problem for millions of sufferers.

*The following suggestions can help you cool the GERD burn:*

- Avoid GERD instigators: alcohol, chocolate, cigarettes, coffee, meat, milk, mints, tea, tomatoes and sugar as well as fatty, fried, salty, spicy and sweet foods. Eliminate them from your diet for at least one month and then add them back one at a time to see how your system reacts.
- Eat small, frequent meals and chew well; large meals can put pressure on your diaphragm and weaken it.
- Don't lie down after a meal. Eat at least three hours before bedtime.
- Don't drink liquids with meals; they'll expand your stomach, increasing pressure on your diaphragm.
- Avoid sit-ups or do only modified ones, and don't wear tight clothing around the abdomen; both can cause the stomach to tighten.
- Sleep with your head elevated.
- Practice abdominal breathing; it keeps your diaphragm moving, which will help prevent attacks. Here's a quick exercise: Lie on your back and place a hardcover book on your stomach, covering your navel. As you take a deep breath, you should see the book rise with your stomach if you are doing the abdominal breathing correctly.
- In the morning, use gravity to put your stomach into proper position. Before breakfast, drink an 8-ounce glass of water (to add a little weight to your stomach). Now rise on your toes and thump down on your heels. Do this about 10 times.
- Instead of regular tea, try a soothing and healing herbal tea. Check your local health food store.

*(Information from  
"Ask the Experts,"  
Natural Health  
Shopper, Carolyn  
Dean, M.D.;  
GERD Information  
Resource Center)*



# BINGE BUSTERS

## 10 Unique Ways to Beat Diet Cheating

**B**y mid-year, some of our New Year's resolutions to lose weight may tend to run out of steam. Don't give up! Here are unique ways to help keep your diet up to speed from weight loss and wellness expert Dr. Howard Rankin, author of the *7 Steps to Wellness* (StepWise Press). The doctor advises not to dwell on the chocolate cake you're missing, but to invest your energies other ways.

**1. Watch TV.** You don't want to become a couch potato, but if you stay put during commercials, you won't raid the refrigerator. Make the kitchen a no-fly zone.

**2. Do yard work.** Thirty-eight minutes of mowing the lawn burns 250 calories. Spring clearing and planting can add up to a more fit you.

**3. Hit the mall, but sidestep the food court.** Briskly walk the mall, and park far away from the entrance to burn more calories. Skip the trip to the pizza counter or wherever chimichangas are lurking.

**4. People watch.** Your observations at the park or the beach will likely reveal that the perfect figure is a Madison Avenue myth. Coming to terms on how everyone is flawed in one way or another may help you go easier on yourself. But while you're there, take a walk or jump into a volleyball game.

### 5. Reach out and touch someone.

Phone a friend, but not from the kitchen. Better yet, make the call from your treadmill or exercise bike. With both feet and mouth moving, you can burn calories while catching up on the latest gossip.

**6. Clean out your closets and drawers.** Weeding through those "fat" and "skinny" clothes is a good incentive for sticking to your diet. But before tossing out your comfy clothes, remember we all have bad days; those "big" clothes may come in handy.

**7. Make a beeline for the local library or museum.** Most such institutions don't allow food or drinks. Soak up culture without laying on the calories. Your mind will be sharper, your conversation more sparkling and your body more streamlined as a result.

**8. Drink water.** A tall glass of H<sub>2</sub>O can make your belly feel full. Plus, glass

after glass adds up to sufficient water consumption as part of a healthy lifestyle.

**9. Master a puzzle or game.** Find an activity that keeps your hands anywhere but near your mouth. If a puzzle isn't energetic enough for you, lift weights or put on an exercise tape.

**10. Log onto the Internet.** Surf the Net for meal planning ideas, online health newsletters, low fat recipes, and chat rooms and bulletin boards on healthy topics to help keep your diet on track.

*(Information from eDiets.com)*

## Take This Tension Test

How stressed are you? Take the following test created by consulting company Stress Directions to determine your stress susceptibility. Respond to the sample statements on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 meaning almost always, and 5 meaning almost never. The higher your score, the higher your stress susceptibility.

- I eat at least one balanced, hot meal a day, and get at least seven hours of sleep a night.
- I am in good health.
- I exercise at least twice a week.
- I regularly give and receive affection.
- I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
- My income meets basic expenses.
- I organize my time effectively.
- I get strength from my religious beliefs.
- I do something fun at least once a week.
- I speak openly about my feelings.
- I take quiet time for myself.
- I have an optimistic outlook on life.

Now look back over the list and check off the items you might more actively pursue in your life to help tame the tension!

Dr. Andrew Weil suggests the "relaxing breath" as a powerful tool in stress management.

- Sit up with your back straight (eventually you'll be able to do this exercise in any position).
- Place your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there throughout the exercise.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- Repeat this cycle three more times for a total of four breaths. Do this exercise twice a day.

*(Information from The New York Times; Biobehavioral Institute and Treatment Center; Ask Dr. Weil)*