

Acid Reflux Medication: Keeping Heartburn at Bay

In a normal digestive process, the partially digested food is being forwarded by muscular movements from the stomach to the intestines. However, for some people, the stomach contents travel back to the esophagus from the stomach. This condition is known as acid reflux.

Common symptoms of this disease include heartburn, difficulty in swallowing, regurgitation, chest pains, dental erosion, hoarseness, asthma, dyspepsia, vomiting, and many others.

If not properly treated, acid reflux can last for several months. But drug treatment can play an essential part in the treatment process of a patient.

The most common medications used include the following:

Antacids. These drugs are used to neutralize the acids in the digestive tract and are primarily taken in for relief of mild symptoms, such as occasional episodes of indigestion and heartburn. They also act to incite the defensive mechanisms of our stomach by building up the secretion of mucous and bicarbonate. Most antacids can be bought over the counter even without a medical prescription. Moreover, these drugs are one of the first to be recommended by professionals to lessen the pain brought about by heartburn or mild symptoms. The three basic ingredients of antacids are magnesium, calcium, and aluminum.

Acid suppressants such as histamine blockers are also commonly used. Histamine blockers obstruct the production of stomach acids by alienating the actions of histamine. Histamine is a chemical in the body that promotes the production and secretion of acids in the stomach. Anti-histamines are available even without prescription and offers relief of symptoms in most of the patients with frequent acid reflux. Patients have to wait for 30 to 90 minutes for these drugs to take effect. But their effect also lasts six to 24 hours. In cases of severe symptoms, a patient may have to take two dosages a day. In some researches, histamine blockers have shown to improve asthmatic symptoms in those who endure from both acid reflux and asthma.

However, in a study dated 2001, it was suggested that histamine blockers occasionally impart complete relief of symptoms for dyspepsia and heartburn.

Proton pump inhibitors are also employed as a medication. They act to trim down the production of stomach acids by reacting with the cells found in the stomach wall which produce and release acids into the stomach. However, researches have revealed that the use of proton pump inhibitors poses some concerns. Side

effects, although uncommon, include diarrhea, headache, itching, and nausea. Moreover, these drugs should also be stayed away from by pregnant and breast-feeding mothers.

Another medication that is generally handled is the use of agents which protect the mucus lining in the gastrointestinal region. This kind of drug acts by attaching to an ulcer crater so that it will be guarded from damage caused by digestive acids. It is advisable for people undergoing maintenance therapy with mild or moderate acid reflux conditions. Likewise, it has minor side effects, including constipation.

Anti-spasm drugs are also utilized to prevent acid and even non-acid reflux. A gamma-amino acid butyric acid agonist, an anti-spasm drug is generally used to abate the spasms in the muscles. Unlike most medicines used for acid reflux, it can also lessen non-acid refluxes and amplify the pressure in the lower esophageal sphincter, a muscle that separates the esophagus from the stomach and prevents backing up of stomach contents.