

Acid Stomach...

More commonly known as heartburn, this causes a burning pain in the gullet and chest, often accompanied by belching (which seems to bring relief), and sometimes a feeling of food getting stuck. Causes vary, but often include overeating, or consuming too much rich or spicy food and alcohol. Stress can also contribute. Acid stomach is common in pregnant women and people who are overweight.

Prevention

Avoid rich, spicy food. Eat little and often, and avoid heavy meals at night. Take regular exercise to aid digestion - but not immediately after a meal. Try to reduce stress.

Treatment

Dietary

Reduce intake of food, and eat little and often. Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola), alcohol, sugar, carbonated drinks, spices and fatty foods. Counteract acidity by eating plenty of alkaline foods: fresh fruit and vegetables (but not milk).

Herbal

Meadowsweet infusion soothes the membranes of the digestive tract: add one cup of boiling water to 1-2 teaspoons of the dried herb, infuse for 15 minutes, and drink. Take three times daily. Ginger can be taken in capsule form or as a decoction: add 1.5 teaspoons of the freshly grated root to a cup of water, simmer for 10 minutes and drink when needed.

Homeopathy

Take 1 tablet every 15 minutes for up to 4 doses and repeat if needed: After rich foods, with gas and rancid belching: Carbo vegetabilis 6c. After spicy food, caffeine, alcohol: Nux vomica 6c. Burning pain, worse in the small hours of the morning: Arsenicum album 6c.

Chinese Medicine

Acid stomach is thought to be caused by an imbalance of the spleen and liver. Herbs recommended include ginseng, liquorice and orange peel. Acidic and 'cold' foods (bananas, grapefruit, salads, watermelons, tomatoes) should be avoided.

Exercise

Regular exercise, walking, running, swimming or cycling at least 3 times a week helps reduce weight, takes pressure off the stomach, and relieves stress. However, never exercise within 3 hours of eating.

Orthodox

Antacids, a mixture of magnesium hydroxide and aluminium hydroxide, can be bought over the counter. They should be taken 1-2 hours before meals, and last thing at night. Antacids should be taken with caution by anyone suffering from high blood pressure, kidney disease or any type of intestinal bleeding. Calcium + Magnesium are particularly alkaline and very important.