



Reflux Esophagitis and Cystic Fibrosis

Helpful tips

This handout gives helpful tips for cystic fibrosis patients who need help reducing or preventing reflux.

What is reflux esophagitis?

Reflux esophagitis is also called *gastroesophageal reflux disease* (GERD). It occurs when stomach contents (food or liquid, and stomach acid) leak from the stomach up into the *esophagus* (the tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach). This can irritate the esophagus and cause heartburn and other symptoms.

Reflux esophagitis is common in people with cystic fibrosis. This is caused by having a lot of acid in the stomach. This large amount of stomach acid can be related to *pancreatic insufficiency*. This is when the pancreas does not produce enough digestive enzymes for normal digestion to occur.

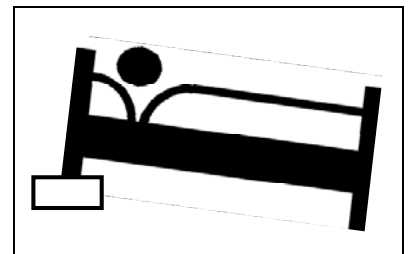
Also, coughing is common among people with cystic fibrosis. Coughing causes pressure in the stomach. This pressure may make symptoms of reflux esophagitis worse.

Helpful Tips

You may find some or all of these tips helpful in reducing or preventing reflux. Ask your doctor which of these may help you the most.

Raise the Head of Your Bed

- Place wood blocks or bricks under the legs at the head of your bed to raise it 2 to 6 inches.
- Or, place a foam wedge beneath the upper half of your body.
- Do **not** use extra pillows to prop up your upper body.



Place wood blocks or bricks under the head of your bed.

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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Adult Cystic Fibrosis Clinic: 206-598-8446 (Voicemail)

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Pulmonary Fellow on call to be paged

For appointments, call the Medical Specialties/ Cystic Fibrosis Clinic: 206-598-4615

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MEDICAL CENTER

Cystic Fibrosis Clinic

Box 356166

1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195
206-598-8446

Avoid Certain Foods and Drinks

Avoid or limit the foods and drinks that cause your reflux symptoms. These include:

- Spicy foods
- Fatty foods
- Acidic juices such as tomato and citrus (grapefruit and orange)
- Chocolate and mints
- Coffee, tea, and soft drinks (see “Caffeine Drinks” below)
- Alcoholic beverages

Caffeine Drinks

Limit coffee to 2 to 3 cups a day. It may also help to limit other beverages that contain caffeine, such as some teas and soft drinks.

Let Gravity Help

- Wait for 2 hours after eating before lying down or sitting in a reclining chair.
- Avoid bending over at the waist to pick up things. Instead, keep your back straight and bend at your knees when you need to reach down.

Avoid Tight Clothing

- Wear clothing that fits loosely around your waist.
- Avoid tight belts, pants, or girdles. These can increase pressure on your abdomen and cause stomach acid to back up into your esophagus.

Take Antacids

Antacids can be taken at bedtime and 30 to 60 minutes after each meal, as directed by your doctor.

Eating Tips

- Do not overfill your stomach.
- Eat smaller meals more often instead of 3 larger meals.
- Be sure to get enough calories every day.