



LPR Reflux Stomach Acid In The Throat

LPR can cause:
Hoarseness
Trouble swallowing
Too much throat mucus
Constant throat clearing
A "lump" in the throat
Chronic cough
Heartburn

WHAT IS REFLUX AND WHAT IS LPR?

The term REFLUX comes from a Greek word that means "backflow," and it usually refers to "the back flow of stomach contents." Normally, once the things that we eat reach the stomach, digestion should begin without the contents of the stomach coming back up again....refluxing.

The term LARYNGOPHARYNGEAL REFLUX (LPR) refers to the backflow of food or stomach acid all of the way back up into the larynx (the voice box) or the pharynx (the throat). LPR can occur during the day or night, even if a person who has LPR hasn't eaten a thing during the last couple of hours.

Not everyone who has reflux has LPR. Some people have reflux just into the esophagus (the swallowing tube that joins the throat to the stomach). If this happens a lot, a person may develop heartburn (a painful, burning sensation in the chest).

MANY PEOPLE WITH LPR DON'T HAVE HEARTBURN....WHY IS THAT?

Some people with LPR have a lot of heartburn, but, people who have LPR usually don't have heartburn very often. In fact, half of the people who have LPR never have heartburn at all. This is because the material that refluxes does not stay in the esophagus for very long. In other words, the acid does not have enough time to irritate the esophagus. However, if even small amounts of refluxed material come all the way up into the throat, other problems can occur. This is because compared to the esophagus, the voice box and throat are much more sensitive to the injury and irritation from stomach acid.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE LPR?

Chronic hoarseness, throat clearing, and cough, as well as feeling of a lump in the throat or difficulty swallowing, may be signs that you have LPR. Some people have hoarseness that comes and goes, and others have a problem with too much nose and throat drainage, that is, too much mucus or phlegm.

If you have any of these symptoms, and especially if you smoke, you should ask your doctor about

LPR. The specialist who most often treats people with LPR is the Otolaryngologist (Ear, Nose, and Throat Physician).

If your doctor thinks that you could have LPR, he or she will probably perform a throat exam first and look at the voice box and the lower throat. If this area looks swollen and/or red, you may have LPR. At this point, your doctor may order some tests or recommend specific treatment.

HOW IS LPR TREATED?

Treatment for LPR should be individualized, and your doctor will suggest the best treatments for you. Generally, there are several treatments for LPR:

- 1) Changing lifestyle habits and diet to reduce reflux
- 2) Medications to reduce stomach acid
- 3) Surgery to prevent reflux

Most people with LPR need to modify how and when they eat, as well as take some medication, to get well.

WILL I NEED LPR TREATMENT FOREVER?

Most patients with LPR require some treatment, most of the time, and some people need medicine all of the time. Some people recover completely for months or years, and then may have a relapse.

For people with severe LPR, or people who cannot take reflux medicine, "antireflux" surgery (to create a new and better valve from the esophagus to the stomach) may be recommended. In people who have this surgery, many get good relief from LPR for many years.

WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS CAN LPR CAUSE, AND ARE THEY SERIOUS?

LPR can cause serious problems. LPR can cause noisy breathing, choking, episodes, breathing problems (such as asthma or bronchitis).