

Tips on how to avoid holiday heartburn from a gastroenterologist

11 December 2014, by Stasia Thompson

President Obama's recent diagnosis of acid reflux is prompting wide awareness of an ailment that is especially prevalent at this time of year. Fortunately, acid reflux and its complications can be avoided, as a Loyola gastroenterologist explains.

Mukund Venu, MD, gastroenterologist at Loyola University Medical Center. "Signs of acid reflux disease include a burning sensation or pressure in your chest and/or throat, a persistent cough, burping and bloating.

Dr. Venu said triggers for acid reflux disease include holiday favorites such as high-fat foods, alcohol, caffeine, chocolate and foods with [citric acid](#).

Acid reflux, or [gastroesophageal reflux disease](#) (GERD) occurs when acid located in the stomach enters the esophagus.

"When a muscle called the lower esophageal sphincter relaxes, acid can reflux from the stomach up the esophagus or throat causing extreme discomfort," said the assistant professor at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine

"Obesity is a well-documented risk factor in acid reflux disease."

Lifestyle changes are the first line of defense.

"Do not lie down for at least three hours after you eat a meal," Dr. Venu advised. "Try sleeping at a 45-degree angle to prevent reflux."

Other suggestions to maintain good digestive health include avoiding caffeine and fatty foods, maintaining a regular eating and sleeping cycle as well as preventing extreme weight fluctuation.

"If you suffer from persistent heartburn, see a board certified gastroenterologist to see if you

should have an upper endoscopic exam performed," said Dr. Venu, who specializes in GERD and regularly conducts gastroenterology research trials at Loyola. "If [lifestyle changes](#) do not work, your gastroenterologist will likely prescribe a medication known as proton pump inhibitors once a day to be taken at least 30 minutes before a meal."

A [proton pump inhibitor](#) is a liquid or pill that reduces the production of acid in the stomach.

"If [acid reflux](#) is left untreated, there may be a risk for progression to a precancerous condition called Barrett's esophagus that can ultimately lead to esophageal cancer," he warned. "With a few lifestyle modifications, most people find relief."

Gastroenterology is a broad field covering a wide range of patient care, from endoscopy and colonoscopy to hepatitis C and pancreatic cancer.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

APA citation: Tips on how to avoid holiday heartburn from a gastroenterologist (2014, December 11) retrieved 15 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-holiday-heartburn-gastroenterologist.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.