

Got chronic heartburn? Easy does it during the Thanksgiving feast

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(HealthDay)—The turkey, stuffing, cranberries, green bean casserole and mashed potatoes on the Thanksgiving table may look tempting, but if you have gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) you should proceed with caution, experts say.

GERD is often called chronic heartburn or [acid reflux](#).

"When it comes to what we eat and drink over the holidays, it is important to remember the saying: everything in moderation," said Dr. Robert Kavitt, director of the University of Chicago Medicine Center for Esophageal Diseases.

A common digestive disorder, GERD occurs when [stomach acid](#) flows back into the esophagus, which is the tube that connects the mouth and stomach.

It's important for people with GERD to eat slowly and avoid overeating, Kavitt said. Eating slowly gives you time to feel full, which decreases your risk of overeating. Overeating puts pressure on the

lower esophageal sphincter (LES) muscle, a ring-like muscle that acts as a valve between the esophagus and stomach. When that muscle is weakened, acid can flow back into the esophagus and trigger a GERD episode.

Eat at least an hour or two before going to bed. It's more difficult to digest your food when you're lying down, so eating earlier and staying upright for a bit will allow your food time to break down.

Drink more water and limit carbonated beverages and alcohol. "Carbonated beverages and alcohol can cause relaxation of the LES muscle and trigger GERD," said Dr. Yalini Vigneswaran, also from the Center for Esophageal Diseases. "If you drink more water, it will clear the esophagus and reduce reflux."

Avoid your GERD triggers. Some common ones are: garlic, raw onions, chocolate, red wine, peppermint and [citrus fruits](#).

Have your preferred antacid at the ready. "Prepare for a potential GERD episode by keeping your over-the-counter antacids or medicine prescribed by your doctor handy," Vigneswaran said in a university news release.

"We want people to enjoy themselves; being mindful of what and how they eat will help them to do so," she said.

More information: The American Gastroenterological Association has more on [GERD](#).

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