

NORTH COUNTY EAR, NOSE, AND THROAT-
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY
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ACID REFLUX

WHAT IS ACID REFLUX?

Acid reflux is also known as GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease). GERD that comes all the way up to the back of the throat and voice-box area is called "laryngopharyngeal reflux" (LPR).

Laryngopharyngeal reflux is the regurgitation of stomach secretions (acids) from the stomach up into the esophagus (food pipe) and then up into the laryngopharynx (throat and voice box area). Many things contribute to acid reflux...the final problem being looseness of the muscle between the esophagus and stomach. LPR can lead to "chronic laryngitis" or "chronic laryngopharyngitis."

Possible Symptoms

- voice change
- hoarseness
- burning
- soreness
- bad breath
- chronic cough
- a need to clear the throat
- a sense that there is a foreign body or mass in the throat (globus)

Oftentimes there is *no* heartburn or stomach upset!

What was my doctor looking for with the telescope?

The telescope looks directly at the throat and voice box to evaluate the changes that the stomach acid may have made to the surface lining. This may include irritative swelling, redness, or hardening. It would also rule out any concerning growths or movement problems. The vocal cords are in the voice box, so they are visualized at the same time. It does *not* look into the esophagus.

How is reflux treated?

Essential lifestyle changes

- STOP SMOKING!!
- avoid alcohol
- limit caffeine, chocolate, fatty/spicy foods, mints, carbonated drinks
- eat smaller meals, more frequently
- elevate the head of your bed 6 inches (blocks under the head bedposts works well...extra pillows under your head does *not*)
- nothing to eat or drink 3 hours before bedtime (unless medically indicated to do so such as certain diabetic or ulcer patients)
- avoid tight fitting clothing
- weight reduction

Medicine management

A strong acid-suppression medicine called a "proton-pump inhibitor" has likely been prescribed for you. There are many kinds and some work better than others for different patients (brand names include Prilosec, Nexium, Aciphex, and Prevacid.) It takes a longer time and higher doses for these medicines to help with the throat and voice box symptoms that it does to help with heartburn.

If your symptoms do not respond appropriately to this medicine, you may be sent for further testing.