



Dr. Drew Sinatra:

In today's **Wellness Wisdom** segment, I wanted to focus on a condition that impacts so many of us, causing major discomfort...and that's GERD. GERD, which is short for gastroesophageal reflux disease, is very common. In fact, it's estimated that 20% of Americans report GERD symptoms on a regular basis. GERD is a condition that affects the esophagus and stomach, and it usually presents with chronic acid reflux. If you've ever experienced a burning sensation in your chest after eating a large meal, then you've likely had acid reflux.

Acid reflux occurs when the stomach contents pass through the lower esophageal sphincter, or LES, into the esophagus. Occasional heartburn isn't a huge concern — but chronic exposure to stomach acid can erode the lining of the esophagus, causing more serious conditions. So, it's really important to get, and keep, your GERD under control.

So, how do you know if you have GERD? Chronic, repeated episodes of heartburn or reflux can lead to GERD, and GERD can also present with other irritating symptoms, including: belching, difficulty swallowing, sensation of something stuck in your throat, chronic cough or difficulty breathing, nausea, losing your voice, bad breath, or a bitter or sour taste in your mouth.

Fortunately, there are many natural medicine remedies available that I recommend to my patients to treat GERD, and I always like to start with diet. Most people see benefits from eliminating certain foods that can cause irritation, and adding foods that can help heal an inflamed esophagus. If you have GERD, I highly suggest eating whole foods, and removing processed foods with added sugar, as these can lead to increased inflammation.

Additionally, here are some specific foods that can help ease the symptoms of GERD. Most vegetables — vegetables are full of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and fiber, which all support the integrity of the lining of the gastrointestinal tract. One special veggie I want to highlight here is okra, which contains mucilaginous compounds that help support the mucous lining of the GI tract. But it's also important to note that there are some vegetables, like peppers, garlic and onions, that can exacerbate GERD symptoms.

Most fruits — like vegetables, fruits are packed with nutrients and fiber, which helps support optimal functioning of the GI tract. The fruits you'll want to eat are bananas, melon, apples and pears. You'll want to avoid more acidic fruits like tomatoes, pineapple, grapefruits or oranges.

Turmeric — this yellow spice has anti-inflammatory properties that help soothe the lining of the esophagus and stomach. Ginger — ginger is another potent, anti-inflammatory food that can help reduce the symptoms associated with



heartburn and GERD. Drink it as a tea, add chopped ginger to all sorts of dishes, or add a small amount to a juicer and combine with fresh greens and fruits. Fermented foods — fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchi, beet kvass, miso, apple cider vinegar and pickled vegetables are loaded with probiotics. Oatmeal— oatmeal is an excellent breakfast option for those suffering from GERD; it's a whole grain food that's high in fiber.

Now, let's move on to some of the foods you'll want to avoid if you have GERD. Fried and fatty foods — fried and fatty foods can cause the lower esophageal sphincter, a bundle of muscles that separates the stomach from the esophagus, to relax, which may allow more stomach acid to move from the stomach into the esophagus, causing heartburn-like symptoms. Peppers — this member of the nightshade family seems to cause heartburn for some folks, but not all. Tomatoes — another member of the nightshade family, this fruit is acidic and can trigger GERD symptoms.

Chocolate — just like fried and fatty foods, the compounds in chocolate can cause the LES to relax. Spices — some spices like cayenne, chili, mustard, cinnamon or pepper can be problematic for some people. Peppermint — although this herb is generally known for cooling and calming the body, it can be aggravating for those prone to GERD. Coffee — coffee is notorious for causing heartburn, because it's inherently acidic.

Hopefully, making some of these small but powerful dietary changes will help to minimize the uncomfortable symptoms of GERD you may be experiencing. Cheers to good health!

Narrator:

Thank you for joining us for today's special **Be HEALTHistic**. Join us next week for more **Wellness Wisdom** from the Doctors Sinatra.