

Tips that will help you avoid heartburn

Heartburn is a term used to describe a burning sensation located under the breastbone. This condition has nothing to do with either heart or fire. The discomfort is caused by irritation of the lower part of the esophagus, the tube which connects the mouth and stomach. Acid usually does not cause a problem in the stomach, because the lining of the stomach is protected from its own acid by cells in the walls of the stomach. However, in some conditions, there is a back flow from the stomach into the esophagus, which does not have any protection in its wall. The burning sensation occurs when this happens.



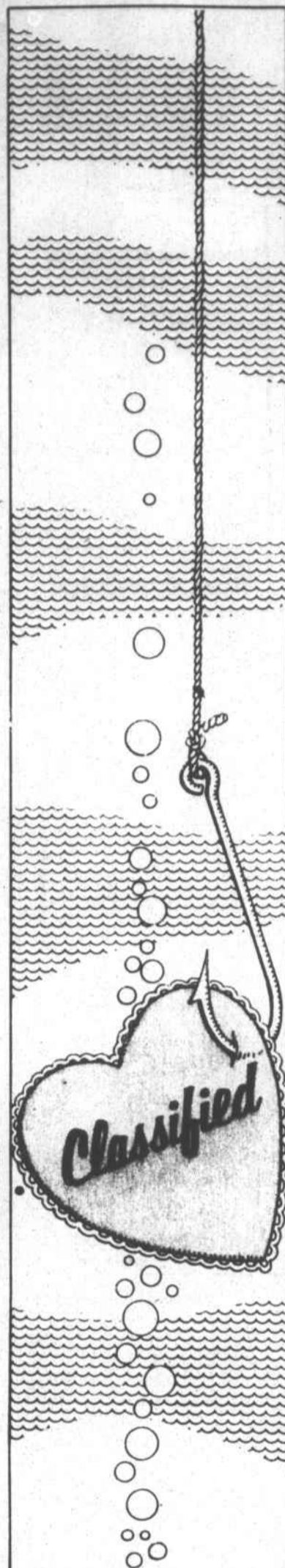
Some foods, habits and medicines aggravate heartburn. Foods such as coffee, tea, chocolate, highly spiced foods, fatty foods and large volumes of food make the condition worse. Habits such as tobacco smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages may cause heartburn. Aspirin can be irritating to the stomach causing heartburn. Women who are pregnant may experience heartburn because of the pressure of the enlarged womb on the

stomach. Overweight individuals seem to have more problems with heartburn, also.

How can heartburn be treated? First of all, it is important to make sure that the distress is from heartburn and not from other causes. If the discomfort gets worse with activity or is associated with a tight pain in the chest, you should contact family physician. This could indicate a problem with the heart rather than heartburn.

To relieve heartburn you should avoid the items that aggravate the condition by eating smaller meals, avoiding the irritating foods and stopping smoking can prevent the over-supply of acid in the stomach. Lying flat after large meals may cause heartburn. If you must lie down after eating, you should try placing 6-8" blocks of wood under the legs at the head of the bed to elevate it. This will help prevent heartburn.

The symptoms of heartburn can be improved by taking an antacid. This medicine can be obtained either in a liquid or tablet form. Liquid antacids are preferable—one or two tablespoons can be taken an hour after meals and at bedtime or when distressed. Overweight people should lose weight and avoid tight girdles and belts. Certain prescription medicines may also be of benefit, so consult your family doctor if symptoms persist. (Written as a Public Service of the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians.)



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C. Edison Harris, President
H. Gene Boyce, Sec.-Treas.

HERTFORD SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION