

# SEE YOUR DOCTOR

## Pitching In For Health

by Jim Palmer

(NAPSA)—It may be a healthy idea to consider these questions;

- Do you have persistent heartburn two or more days a week?

- Have you discussed this frequent and persistent heartburn with your doctor and let him or her know that it keeps returning, no matter what you do?

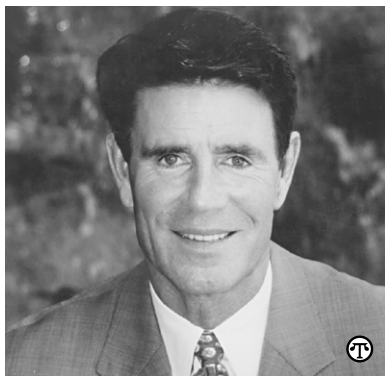
- Do you often take antacids or other remedies to reduce the symptoms of frequent heartburn?

- Does your heartburn make you so uncomfortable that it sometimes interferes with your social life or work?

- Have diet and lifestyle changes failed to provide relief?

You may be one of the 21 million Americans who suffer from a chronic condition called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Since I have personal experience with this disease, I know that millions of people suffer needlessly instead of getting proper medical treatment. To create greater awareness of the condition, its symptoms and treatments, I am working on a campaign called *Pitching in for Community Health* with AstraZeneca and the Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities (CHCC). As part of the campaign, we will be visiting baseball stadiums and health fairs around the country to bring attention to the fact that more and more Americans are living with chronic conditions, such as GERD.

One of the most common symptoms of GERD is persistent heartburn—identified as heartburn that occurs on two or more days a week. This is caused when stomach acid backs up into the esophagus and creates a burning sensation behind the breastbone. I thought my lifestyle was to blame for my GERD. For nearly 20 years, I pitched for the Baltimore Orioles and after that, I became a broadcast sports commentator. Both jobs involved constant traveling and I grabbed a meal when I could—often on the run or late at night.



**Jim Palmer is a sportscaster, former Orioles pitcher and member of the Baseball Hall of Fame.**

Eventually, I developed hoarseness and a sore throat and occasionally lost my voice completely. This can happen when the constant backwash of stomach acid begins to erode the lining of the esophagus. This condition is called erosive esophagitis (EE) and it is a more severe form of GERD. At this point, my career as a broadcaster was threatened. Fortunately, I found a doctor who diagnosed the condition and prescribed proper medication.

I've been fortunate in that the medication I currently take—NEXIUM™—(esomeprazole magnesium) allows me to work without worrying about heartburn coming back. Results may vary. I do have regular medical checkups and follow my doctor's advice. NEXIUM is not for everyone. The most common side effects of NEXIUM are headache, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Also, remember that symptom relief does not rule out serious stomach conditions.

One of the mistakes many people with frequent and persistent heartburn make is blaming it on their diet, hectic schedules and stress. While these things can make the condition worse, they don't cause it—and it won't go away on its own.

Educating people about chronic conditions such as GERD not only improves the health of the individ-

ual but the health of the entire community. That's why patient education programs like these are so important. Learning about a disease such as GERD is an important first step toward improved health.

So if you think you may have GERD, talk about it with your doctor. Only your doctor can determine whether you have this condition. Ask him or her what medications are available and if they're right for you.

Educating yourself about GERD—or any disease you might have—is the best way to help you and your doctor get the care and treatment that's right for you. The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities is dedicated to teaching people about the best ways to access the resources in their communities to live as healthy as possible. CHCC is a national organization that has its roots in a strategic relationship with over 1,000 broad-based community partnerships across the nation working to improve our health.

For more information about GERD and the *Pitching in for Community Health* campaign, please visit the Web site at [www.PitchForHealth.org](http://www.PitchForHealth.org) or call 1-877-Reflux2. For more information about NEXIUM or for a copy of the full prescribing information, call Ed Weirauch at 1-800-942-0424, ext. 1977.

### Did You Know...

- That over time, acid churning up can wash away the lining of your esophagus, causing erosions?
- That acid causes breaks in the lining of the esophagus, a condition called erosive esophagitis?
- That erosive esophagitis is a potentially serious disease?
- That there are treatments that can provide symptom relief and heal the damage to the esophagus?

*Maybe it's more serious than just heartburn. Maybe it's time to see your doctor.*

