Food For Thought

Avoid The Heat Of Heartburn

(NAPSA)—Whether it's picnics, baseball or backyard barbeques, heartburn can sometimes spoil the fun. Don't let it. Take a few minutes to identify different types of heartburn and the appropriate steps to take to stop heartburn before it starts.

Summer Foods— A Trigger Of Heartburn

Some summer foods and beverages (like greasy burgers or lemonade) may be heartburn triggers in some individuals. These items tend to relax the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), which is the band of muscle between the esophagus and the stomach that keeps undigested food from backing up into the esophagus and causing irritation[1]. Below is a list of the common foods and beverages related to heartburn:

- Fat
- Citrus products
- Tomatoes
- Lemons
- Limes
- Oranges
- Grapefruit
- Fried foods
- Peppers
- Garlic
- Onions
- Chocolate
- Caffeine
- Alcohol

Pat Baird, nutritionist and National Heartburn Alliance board member, offers the following tips to avoid summer heartburn:

• Use lean cuts of meat, like flank steak, instead of fattier cuts[2].

• Substitute shredded zucchini or yellow squash—instead of tomatoes—in your salad[3].

• Drink water, noncitrus fruit drinks or decaffeinated iced tea instead of lemonade or caffeinated cola drinks[4].

• Eat smaller meals, include snacks and keep the fat low[5].

"When heartburn sufferers make smarter choices, they can relax and enjoy the summer," says Pat Baird, RD. "Small lifestyle adjustments like avoiding lemonade and taking a walk after dinner can make a big difference. If you find that these changes don't help, talk to your health care professional about other options that make the most sense for you. Often, the key to treatment is to understand the type of heartburn that you have."

Understanding Heartburn

Understanding your heartburn type is essential to know how to choose the most appropriate medicine. Treatment options are available, including antacids (e.g., Tums, a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline), H2 blockers (e.g., Zantac, a registered trademark of Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals) and proton pump inhibitors (e.g., Prilosec OTC, a registered trademark of Procter & Gamble). Speak to your doctor about which is best for you.

Furthermore, the key to treating heartburn is to understand what type you have. Heartburn is a condition caused by stomach acid flowing up into the esophagus, however, contrary to popular belief, there are different types of heartburn:

• Episodic or occasional heartburn is characterized by infrequent bouts of heartburn that are usually manageable or predictable in the short term.

• Frequent heartburn (FHB) occurs two or more days per week. Frequent heartburn sufferers may also be those who medicate heartburn symptoms two or more days per week. People with FHB might also find themselves using multiple over-the-counter (OTC) medications two or more days a week for relief.

• Severe or chronic heartburn occurs more than two days per week and persists while taking appropriate medications, despite dietary and lifestyle changes. Sufferers with severe heartburn should speak to a health care professional.

For more information on heartburn and how to treat it, visit the National Heartburn Alliance at www.heartburnalliance.org.

Note to Editors:

[1] *NHBA Web site; Accessed Web site on April 9, 2007: http://www.heartburnalliance.com/section3/holiday.jsp*

[2] *About.com Web site; Accessed Web site on April 9, 2007: http://heartburn.about.com/od/preventingheartburn/a/summerheartburn.htm*

[3] *About.com Web site; Accessed Web site on April 9, 2007: http://heartburn.about.com/od/preventingheartburn/a/summerheartburn.htm*

[4] *About.com Web site; Accessed Web site on April 9, 2007: http://heartburn.about.com/od/preventingheartburn/a/summerheartburn.htm*

[5] *About.com Web site; Accessed Web site on April 9, 2007: http://heartburn.about.com/od/preventingheartburn/a/summerheartburn.htm*