

Understanding Your Body

Is Your Body Burning To Tell You Something?

(NAPSA)—Approximately 60 million Americans experience heartburn once a month, while 25 million experience it everyday—leading many to wonder what causes the burning and what can be done about it.

Stomach acid, which helps with the digestion of food, is usually not a problem when it stays where it belongs—in the stomach. Acid reflux occurs when the stomach's contents—including acid—back up, or reflux, into the esophagus, the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach. This can lead to heartburn and other acid reflux symptoms—which are the body's way of saying that something might be wrong.

Between the esophagus and the stomach, there is a natural barrier or valve, which for most people works just fine. In people with acid reflux disease, this valve doesn't always work properly, either because it relaxes too frequently, or because it's weakened. As a result, stomach acid comes up—and into contact with the esophagus.

The stomach lining is designed to handle stomach acid, but the more delicate lining of the esophagus is not. When stomach acid comes in contact with the esophagus, it can bring on heartburn.

If you experience persistent heartburn and other uncomfort-



able symptoms such as belching two or more days per week, despite changing your diet and trying over-the-counter medications, you may have gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), also known as acid reflux disease. If left untreated, it may even damage the esophagus, a condition known as erosive GERD. Heartburn and other acid reflux disease symptoms are the body's way of telling you something may be wrong.

Common Symptoms of Acid Reflux Disease

- Heartburn, a burning discomfort behind the chest that moves up toward the throat and tends to worsen after eating, when lying down after eating or when bending over
- Regurgitation, a bitter or sour taste of acid at the back of

the throat

- Frequent burping

Severe heartburn does not always mean that severe damage is being done to the esophagus. On the other hand, damage can occur even when symptoms are not present, although it is rare. Without proper treatment, ongoing acid reflux disease, also called GERD, may lead to more serious conditions.

Talk to a Doctor

A chronic condition such as acid reflux disease should be discussed with and diagnosed by a doctor. Doctors can prescribe treatments such as ACIPHEX® (rabeprazole sodium) to provide steady acid control that helps the body help itself.

About Treatment

ACIPHEX, a proton pump inhibitor, works by decreasing the production of acid in the stomach. ACIPHEX is indicated for the treatment of symptomatic GERD, healing of erosive GERD, maintenance of healed erosive GERD and symptoms related to these conditions.

ACIPHEX has a well-established safety record. The most common side effect possibly related to ACIPHEX is headache. Symptom relief does not rule out other serious stomach conditions. Patients also on warfarin (such as Coumadin®) may need to be monitored more closely by their doctor.