

Acid Reflux, Heartburn, and GERD Diet

DIRTY DOZEN FOODS YOU SHOULD AVOID

These are the foods and drinks you must eliminate in the first phase to create a digestive clean slate:

1. Fizzy drinks: Even sparkling water — though not acidic, its bubbles can rise from the stomach, carrying acid
2. Coffee and tea
3. Citrus fruit: Any with pH 4 or less, including lemon, lime and pineapple
4. Tomato: This activates and releases pepsin — the enzyme that can eat away and damage throat tissue — but can be neutralized in the second phase
5. Vinegar: All varieties activate pepsin
6. Wine: It is very acidic, measuring from pH 2.9 to pH 3.9
7. Caffeine: Be aware it's in some painkillers
8. Chocolate: This contains methylxanthine, which increases stomach acid production and is a carminative
9. Alcohol: Vodka and tequila are allowed in the next phase
10. Mint: A powerful carminative, whether as a herb, chewing gum or tea
11. Raw onion: This is a carminative and also a fructan, which means it causes the intestines to absorb water, causing bloating
12. Raw garlic: Also a carminative and a fructan. This is off-limits during both phases. Instead, use fennel.

AND THOSE YOU CAN ENJOY...

During the healing phase, stick to foods with a pH of 5 or above, such as:

1. Fish: Salmon, halibut, trout, sea bass, sole
2. Poultry: Chicken breast, minced turkey, pasture raised eggs
3. Vegetables: Spinach, cos lettuce, rocket, curly kale, bok choy, broccoli, asparagus, celery, cucumbers, courgette, aubergine, potato, sweet potato, carrots (not baby ones), beetroot, chestnut mushrooms, basil, coriander, parsley, rosemary, dried thyme and sage. You can bake vegetables (sweet potato, zucchini, cauliflower, broccoli) and eat with lunch, dinner and as a snack
4. BTW: Lower Cholesterol Levels with Soluble fiber in vegetables as it binds to LDL cholesterol.
5. Raw fruit: Banana, papaya, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, watermelon, lychee and avocado
6. Dried fruit: Dates, raisins, desiccated coconut
7. Nuts and seeds: Cashews, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, almonds, pine nuts
8. Spreads: Fresh, organic almond butter
9. Cheese: I'd opt for the coconut based VioLife Parmesan (Whole Foods) <https://www.violife.com/en-us/products/dairy-free-cheese-blocks/just-like-parmesan-wedge>
10. Bread and grains: Trader Joe's Gluten Free Bread and Bagels, organic rice
11. Condiments: Celtic salt, olive and coconut oil, vanilla extract.
12. SunWarrior Vanilla Pea Protein powder shake in organic Almond Milk (Trader Joe's brand is good or an organic one from Whole Foods)
13. Warmed water in Morning

This plan was tested and 4,000 participants reported relief from the pain and disruption of acid damage. As well as losing weight, they had more energy and less inflammation in their throats.

WHAT THAT ACID IS DOING TO YOU

Before I set out the plan in more detail, let me explain why dietary acid is so damaging. The key lies in pepsin, an enzyme that's meant to help break down food in the stomach.

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But once mixed into gastric acid, it can surge up into the oesophagus, chest, vocal cords and throat, where pepsin molecules can attach to pepsin receptors. This is when the real trouble begins.

Once pepsin is planted in your oesophagus, it is activated each time you eat or drink something acidic.

The pH scale runs from 1 to 14 — anything below pH 7 is considered acidic; everything above that is alkaline.

Pepsin becomes most active in an environment with a pH level between 1 and 4.

If there are no food proteins for it to break down (as there are in the stomach), the activated pepsin will eat away at the throat and oesophagus, causing problems from inflammation and heartburn to Barrett's oesophagus.

What's especially worrying is that once pepsin gets into your esophagus, it floats through the airways and can end up anywhere, including your lungs, where it can cause inflammation and conditions such as asthma and bronchitis.

Pepsin receptors have been found in the sinuses and middle ears in people with acid reflux. The concern is that, if activated repeatedly, pepsin can spark inflammation throughout the body. A key feature of the ***Acid Watcher diet*** is that it keeps pepsin in your stomach, where it belongs, and prevents the activation of it outside the stomach.

DITCH Processed Foods

The secret is not letting calories, carbohydrates or fat dictate whether a food is 'good' or 'bad': make choices based on a food's acidity or pH value.

A general rule is that the more processed a food, the more acidic it is, due to the chemicals used to preserve it.

Dietary acid is found in carbonated drinks (sweetened, fizzy drinks can have a pH of 2.5), commercially produced fruit juices and in products containing high- fructose corn syrup (a sweetener made using sulphuric acid), such as biscuits, cakes and ice cream.

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It's even in canned soups and vegetables — especially if they've been pickled or fermented. If the label includes citric or ascorbic acid, this suggests the product is acidic.

And there are other foods you may be more surprised to learn are bad for an Acid Watcher — take the Mediterranean-style diet, for example.

It protects against inflammation, cardiovascular disease, obesity and insulin- resistance — a precursor to type 2 diabetes — but some of its staples are high- acid foods that must be avoided.

These include wine, tomatoes, vinegar, lemon, onion and garlic (the latter two play a role in bloating, indigestion and heart-burn by putting pressure on the esophageal valve).

Of these, ***wine is the most detrimental*** — not only is it highly acidic, but all alcohol is a carminative, which means it loosens the esophageal valve.

Other carminatives include chocolate, caffeine, fresh and dried mint and peppermint tea, so these should be avoided.

HOW TO REVERSE ACID DAMAGE

The healing phase of the diet is based on eight principles that will help you eliminate or reduce inflammation and tissue damage.

These are:

1. Eliminate acid triggers.
2. Rein in your reflux-generating habits — cut out processed food.
3. Avoid fried food — it loosens the esophageal valve.
4. Eat two to three meals, and two mini-meals, at regular intervals between 7am and 7.30pm. This ensures you don't overeat and allows the stomach three hours to digest before lying down, avoiding night-time reflux.
5. Practice the rule of five: you can eat foods with a pH value of 5 and higher, while pH 4 foods can be introduced in the maintenance phase. These foods will help heal the damage to your esophagus by keeping pepsin in check.
6. Introduce more fiber into your diet slowly — it keeps your digestion healthy, reducing reflux.

Eat a daily vegetables above pH 5 (for example, five medium-sized carrots) — half of which should be raw — and a daily minimum of 225g raw fruit (a handful of cubed cantaloupe with a banana). Vegetables: Non-starchy vegetables like asparagus, lettuce, cauliflower, carrots, spinach, and broccoli

Fruits: banana

Nuts: Chestnuts or pumpkin seeds

Legumes: Kidney beans or white beans

Whole Foods Organic 365 Chickpea pasta with organic low sodium chicken broth

Cappello's Gnocchi in olive oil (TBD) Whole Foods

Other: Almond milk, coconut and avocado

7. Drink only water.

8. Avoid seed oils. These — rapeseed, sunflower, sesame oils — have a borderline pH, but are essentially acidic because their extraction process involves chemicals. Instead, use extra virgin olive oil.

Other borderline foods are peppers, berries and honey, as these stimulate pepsin production.

(However, berries are permitted in the diet if you balance them with an acid neutralizer, such as almond milk, in a smoothie for example.

Similarly, honey can be eaten if combined with a nut butter.)

Spices such as chili are also not recommended during the healing phase, as they can loosen the esophageal valve.

WHY SIT-UPS MAY BE A BAD IDEA

Regular exercise helps to accelerate weight loss, reducing pressure on the esophageal valve.

But the type of exercise you do is important.

Heavy weight-lifting, sit-ups and crunches, excessive jumping (such as in high- impact aerobics), competitive cycling and advanced yoga should all be avoided, as these can encourage gastric acid to flow upwards.

However, gentle yoga can be beneficial because its emphasis on deep-breathing can help reduce stress hormones that increase acid production (but be careful with the 'downward dog' pose, where the head is positioned below the waist, as this may trigger symptoms).

Reflux-safe exercises include cycling on a stationary bike (or one that doesn't require you to crouch) and light weight training.

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CHOOSE TO BE ACID-FREE FOR LIFE

You should notice improvement; everyone heals at their own speed so keeping a notebook with how you are feeling on new supplements and then new eating plan will help you identify your triggers/patterns.

HEALING PHASE pH list (>5.0)

Avocado 7.12

Black olives (Cerignola, in water) 7.10

Watermelon 6.53

Cantaloupe 6.42

Lychee 5.91

Butternut squash (raw) 5.81

Banana 5.71

Papaya 5.66

Dates 5.49

Dragon fruit 5.45

Honeydew 5.42

Pumpkin 5.40

Bosc pear 5.15

Turkish apricot 5.1

Fresh carrots: 4.9–5.2

Celery: 5.7–6.0

Cabbage: 5.20–6.80

Beets: 5.30–6.60

Mushrooms: 6.00–6.70

Broccoli: 6.30–6.85

Collard greens: 6.50–7.50

Potatoes: 5.5–6.2

Organic Almond or Coconut Milk.

Whole Foods Organic Olive Oil

Restaurant Tips

1. Choose chicken or fish for protein options.
2. Prefer roasting, searing, broiling, steaming, baking, or grilling for cooking methods.
3. Avoid breaded, fried, or sauced items.

Foods to Avoid:

Acidic fruits and their juices: oranges, lemon, grapefruits, and cranberries

Fried and fatty foods: French fries and potato chips.

Tomato based foods: spaghetti sauce, pizza, salsa, and chili

Fatty meals: ground beef, chicken nuggets and hot dogs.

Garlic and onions

Hi fat dairy products: sour cream, whole milk

Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages

Spicy foods, red & pepper, chili powder, hot sauces, and mustard

Mint flavorings

Chocolate

Caffeinated drinks

Carbonated drinks

Alcohol

Safe Foods:

Low acidity fruits: apples and bananas Vegetables: broccoli, peas, green beans, carrots Lean meats

Fat- free products

Other Recommendations:

Eat small, frequent meals to prevent stomach distention

Meal or snacks should be eaten 2-3 hours before lying down

Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
Elevate the head of your bed 4-6 inches
Avoid tight clothing