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Reflux Instructions

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux is a condition of abnormal exposure of the voice box and throat (laryngopharynx) to acid from the stomach. Common symptoms are hoarseness, unexplained cough, chronic sore throat, difficulty swallowing, throat-clearing, and the perception that something is caught in your throat. These symptoms can be position-related (worse with lying down) and are often worse. Around the time of eating or shortly thereafter, some people experience a brief sensation of their throat or airway closing-off which is often related to acid reflux. Laryngopharyngeal reflux is not necessarily associated with heartburn, indigestion, or ulcer disease.

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux can be difficult to completely eradicate. Most people will improve with a combination of acid suppression therapy and reflux precautions. Acid suppression therapy involves taking one of the proton pump inhibitors such as Prilosec, Protonix, Zegerid, Prevacid, Aciphex, or Nexium for an extended period of time (often 3 to 6 months) to reverse the damage done to the fragile membranes of the larynx. Reflux precautions are behavior modifications, which minimize reflux.

Commonly employed reflux precautions are listed below:

- Elevate your head of your bed by 4 to 6 inches by placing blocks or books under the head posts of your bed. This will decrease gravity-related reflux. Placing pillows under your head or back is counterproductive because it causes your intra-abdominal pressure to increase, thereby causing more reflux.
- Do not eat in between meals. Eat small volume meals. Do not eat within 3 hours of bedtime. Large volumes of food and frequent feedings cause the stomach to constantly produce acid.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages, chocolate, alcohol, tobacco, and spicy foods as these agents decrease the tone of the sphincters (muscular valves) guarding against reflux. As a result, reflux tends to increase.
- If you are constantly clearing your throat, then you must try and stop. Clearing the throat is very irritating to your larynx and causes a cycle of pain and discomfort. To stop the cycle of irritation, use a throat lozenge or drink a small sip of water when you feel the need to clear your throat.
- It may be helpful to gargle with a pinch of salt and baking soda in a cup of water as hot as you can tolerate. This can be repeated throughout the day to help relieve your symptoms.