

Heart Attack? or Acid Reflux? Ginger, Peppermint & Slippery Elm



Recently a client of mine told me she had a scare that sent her to the emergency room. She was experiencing shortness of breath, a tight feeling in her chest/abdomen, and pain in her middle back when she took a breath. Naturally she was put through several tests to find out what was going wrong with her.

Now keep in mind I was not present, nor can I remember the exact details of every test she explained to me. I do remember it being quite a long list. In these cases, I would venture a guess that it is not uncommon that blood was drawn to be tested, an Electrocardiogram, (*ECG*) echocardiogram, and then stress testing may have been the first tests they administered to find the cause of the problem.

After any, or all, these tests where done the results ended up coming back negative for any heart issues. (*Praise God for this not being the reason for the symptoms she was experiencing*)

Of course more tests where run after the results where negative for heart complications to figure out what was going on.

(*Understand that I do not find this neither uncommon, or wrong to do by medical standards. When a patient is coming in with these symptoms, the last thing you want to do is miss something very crucial leading to your patient's death.*)

After all the testing was done to rule out heart diseases and other complications. The patient was finally diagnosed with Acid Reflux and sent home.

This was a condition the patient already suffered from, and the last thing you'd look for when a patient has potential heart complications. However, this did sadly leave my client with a \$10,000 diagnoses of acid reflux which wouldn't make anyone particularly happy.

So, I'm writing this article for her and other clients who may suffer from acid reflux in the hopes you won't end up in a similar situation.

Acid Reflux

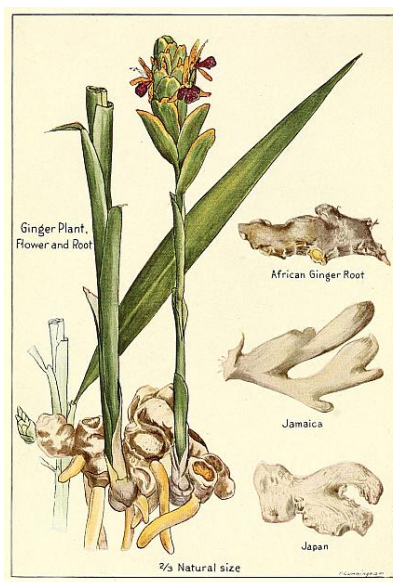
Acid Reflux, now known as GERD (Gastroesophageal reflux disease), and formerly as Dyspepsia or heartburn, is a digestive condition involving the flow of stomach acids. The esophagus has two sphincter muscles, one in the upper esophagus, and one in the lower. These regulate the flow of food into the stomach. When the lower esophagus sphincter does not close properly it can allow stomach contents to back up into the esophagus which connects with the stomach, The reflux is generally in the form of regurgitated acid along with bile and pepsin, and can cause a burning sensation in the throat, and the pain can be overwhelming enough to be misdiagnosed as a heart condition

There are herbs, teas, and essential oils that can help with this condition. We have busy lives and we often overlook these natural solutions because we feel they take longer to work or consume too much time in preparation. First thing to remember is that some can be taken in capsule form. Second thing to remember is your body may be telling you that it needs to take that few minutes extra to boil water and make a tea, allowing it to unwind and relax.

Let's begin by exploring some herbals that are extremely effective in treating GERD. Each herb you find below can be made into a single tea or mixed with other herbs for teas. Some can be added to food and some can be taken orally in capsule form.

The Three most commonly used Herbs are Ginger Root, Slippery Elm, and Peppermint.

Ginger Root



Carminative – aromatic plant aids in dispelling gas, cramping, colic, flatulence and soothing to the stomach
Ginger - Top choice for nausea, potent antimicrobial with digestive enzymes

Exactly what it sounds like. It is the root of the ginger plant. It is used in cooking, herbal remedies, and as an essential oil to treat a multitude of conditions. One of the amazing benefits of this herb is its ability to block acid and suppress helicobacter pylon. In a study done in 2007 they found it far more efficient than the drug lansoprazole in preventing ulcer formation, with greater potency than the drug. Ginger has been used for centuries by different cultures for stomach ailments.

Ginger can be taken in tea or capsule form. Ginger is also used as an Essential oil.

Slippery Elm



Demulcent – soothe, coat and soften inflamed mucus membranes of the digestive tract.
The mucilage content combines with water creates a slippery, semi-solid mass to ease heartburn, constipation, inflammation, irritation and diarrhea.

Slippery Elm - Top choice for nausea, heartburn
Indigestion, constipation or diarrhea

Slippery Elm coats and soothes the mouth, throat, stomach, and intestines, and contains antioxidants that can help address inflammatory bowel conditions. It also stimulates nerve endings in your gastrointestinal tract. This helps increase mucus secretion, which protects your gastrointestinal tract against ulcers and excess acidity.

Slippery Elm can be made into a tea, or a powdered form can be made into capsules

Peppermint



Carminative – aromatic plant aids in dispelling gas, cramping, colic, flatulence and soothing to the stomach

Peppermint – A duel worker it settles the stomach from upset while stimulating the digestive process.

Most often used when there are symptoms of gas pain, heartburn, stomach upset, and nausea. With GERD peppermint should be used in small amount as it also has the ability to stimulate the production of bile. As a two-fold herbal its action is dependent on the amount that is used. For this condition 1 tsp would be enough, and the steep time would be limited to make it a weaker, as opposed to a strong flavored tea. As mentioned, it can be added to the two herbs above as a remedy herbal tea. If making it by itself, then you would be making a tea not a decoction.

To make a tea from a leafy herb you would take 1-2 cups water in a pan and bring it to a boil. Remove it from the heat, add 1 tsp for a light tea, place a cover on the pan and let it steep for 3 minutes. Pour through a strainer to remove the herb and add natural honey to taste.

These three herbs are the most suggested in use for GERDs but there are other teas that can be used that can help to ease and resolve symptoms.

Below is a list of herbal teas that can be taken alone or mixed together for relief of symptoms. When combining it is best to make about an ounce of the mixture and then use 1 tsp to 1 Tbs of the mixture to make your tea.

Chamomile Tea



Carminative – aromatic plant aids in dispelling gas, cramping, colic, flatulence and soothing to the stomach

Chamomile – Calms, soothes and relaxes the digestive system
To prevent food traveling too fast through the digestive process.

Chamomile Tea can help to relieve inflamed or irritated mucus membranes of the digestive tract, which is beneficial to GERD sufferers and helps to promote normal digestion.

If you have allergies to ragweed, then avoid this herb, as it is part of the ragweed family.

Marshmallow Tea



Demulcent – soothe, coat and soften inflamed mucus membranes of the digestive tract.
The mucilage content combines with water creates a slippery, semi-solid mass to ease heartburn, constipation, inflammation, irritation and diarrhea.

Marshmallow Root – Soothing effect on digestion and Softening effect for elimination.

This herb is known for its ability to coat and soothe the gastrointestinal tract. Marshmallow is a root herb and should be made as a decoction as opposed to steeping alone.

Making Tea

To make a tea of Ginger Root, Slippery Elm, or Marshmallow is not the same as making a tea for a leaf herb such as Peppermint. These fall under the classification of hard herbals which include roots, barks, twigs, and berries.

Decoctions are often used for plant matter with tough surfaces or smaller surface areas, bark, root, and berries are generally prepared as decoctions.

To make a decoction place 2 cups of water in a pan and bring the water to a boil. Add 1-2 Tablespoons of a single herb, or combine them to equal 2 Tablespoons of herb, to the water.

Reduce the heat to a medium simmer and allow it to cook for 3-5 minutes.

The water should not be at a high boil but a very gentle rolling boil.

When finished use a small strainer to pour the decoction into a cup to remove the herb(s).

If you wanted to add a leaf herb to the mix, such as Peppermint, simply remove the pan from the heat after the allotted time add 1-2 tsp of the leaf herb, cover the pan and allow a steep for 3-5 minutes, then strain the tea into a cup.

Add natural honey to taste.

When making any loose leaf or flower tea the herb is added after the water is taken of the heat source. This is the difference between a steeped tea, and a decoction.

We recommend natural honey for its health benefits and soothing effects and because sugars can cause inflammation.

Baking Soda & Apple Cider Vinegar

Though these two are not herbs they have a significant impact on GERDs.

Acetic acid is the main component and when combined with stomach acid, hydrochloric acid, reduces the acidity of the stomach contents. Once in the digestive tract it produces acetate salt which prevents the pH level of the stomach from dropping below 3, which is the proper pH for digesting food. 2 tsp in a glass of water before eating could greatly reduce the heartburn experienced after eating and could heal and balance the acidity of the stomach.

Baking Soda is used for immediate relief of heartburn after eating. One-half to one full teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in an eight-ounce glass of water may ease the burn of acid reflux as it helps neutralize stomach acid. I would not recommend this as a regular solution, but it can help in an emergency when you are in excruciating pain. You can also drink baking soda by mixing half a teaspoon of the powder, a few drops of lemon juice and a half-cup of warm water for a safer option.

This is a short list of the many herbs that can help to maintain a healthy digestive system. Other herbs can offer various actions that can sooth, strengthen, and balance the system

Other Carminatives

[Lemon Balm](#) – Calms and sooths nausea and colic

Other Demulcents

[Licorice](#)– Sweet, soothing, anti-inflammatory, good for gastritis and ulcers

[Flax](#) – Soothing, softening, and aid the removal of intestinal waste

[Aloe](#) – bitter, laxative, antimicrobial, aid in digestive health

[Fenugreek](#) – Warm and soothing

Bitters

There is a long history of bitter herbs and foods to aid digestion. The bitter flavor initiates a series of actions that help prepare the digestive system for food. The bitter reflex triggers the release of enzymes, hormones and digestive secretions (saliva, acids and bile). The action stimulates digestion, appetite, intestinal peristalsis, liver detoxification, and regulates blood sugars.

[Goldenseal](#) – Tonifies the mucous membranes, a potent antimicrobial, and a liver & digestive tonic

[Dandelion Root](#) – Stimulates bile flow and digestion, and detoxifies the liver

[Calendula](#) – Tonifies & soothes the system, anti-fungal, and anti-inflammatory

[Gentain](#) – Digestive and liver tonic it strengthens the entire system

[Barberry](#) – Tonifies the liver and digestion and is antimicrobial

[Mugwort](#) – Assists in the digestion of fats and proteins

[Yarrow](#) – Tonifies the system and serves as an astringent

Burdock Root, Artichoke, Turmeric, & Milk Thistle are others that benefit the liver and digestion

GERD AND ESSENTIAL OILS



Essential Oils can play a role in easing the pain and discomfort of acid reflux, as well as assisting to heal and balance some of the root problems, just as the herbs do.

Essential oils should **NEVER** be taken internally with water or any other type of fluid. Remember your basic high school chemistry, oil and water do not mix. Taking the high concentrated essential oils in a liquid that is not oil based allows small droplets of the oil to attach to, and cause damage to, the esophagus and stomach linings.

Essential oils should **ALWAYS** be mixed with a carrier oil and are readily absorbed through the skin and make their way to the appropriate areas of need. An oil as simple as Olive oil will work just fine as a carrier if nothing else is available to you.

Below you will find a list of the oils that are beneficial to GERD and a few extra benefits the oil might offer with its use. When mixing an oil be sure not to get carried away. Essential oils are highly concentrated and a little goes a long way. Two drops in a Tablespoon of oil is more than enough for an adult, *not for children*, they need lower doses of oil and their age depends on what oils can be used.

If your mixing several oils together then make the mix of the pure essential oils, label it, and use two drops of the mix to one Tablespoon of carrier oil.

Apply the mix in a circular counter-clockwise motion on the stomach area.

Other areas of application will be indicated with the oil description where they are useful.

Peppermint Oil

One of the most used for acid reflux as it has a cooling effect to the stomach. It helps to reduce heartburn pain, gas buildup in the intestines, pain from cramping, and calms the stomach muscles. This mix can also be rubbed on the chest, back, and throat for heartburn, this application will also help to relax the body and muscles.

Ginger Oil

Used to soothe the stomach and heal gastric problems it offers relief from heartburn, cramps and bloating. Ginger oil is also known to relieve indigestion and shortness of breath sometimes experienced by sufferers of GERD.

Other benefits that ginger oil offers are: calming and soothing body muscles; improves the immune system; aids in cleaning harmful bacteria from the body. This oil can also be applied to the chest and throat to ease the pain of acid reflux.

Chamomile Oil

The natural ingredients of Chamomile help to reduce inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract, reducing cramping and gas build up, and relieves stomach pain. It relaxes the stomach muscles to help them work more efficiently and supports the digestive process.

Other benefits of Chamomile are: reducing aches and pain throughout the body; boosts the immune system to help fight infections

Lemon Oil

Lemon oil has alkaline properties that can help to neutralize and balance acid in the stomach. It kills harmful bacteria and improves digestion. It aids in maintaining the proper pH level of the body and reduces indigestion as it improves the health of the digestive system.

Other benefits your body will receive from Lemon oil are: aids in fighting infection; flushes toxins from the body; reduces muscle pains and cramping

Note: A mixture of warm water, 2 tsp of Apple Cider Vinegar, 2 tsp of Lemon Juice (NOT OIL) and natural honey to taste, is a good drink to start the day with or to drink before meals.

Orange Oil

Used to reduce spasms in the digestive tract and maintain proper digestion, this oil is often overlooked for those suffering from cramping and pain. It aids in reducing the inflammation and soothes the irritated lining of the stomach, thus reducing the pain. This oil can also be applied to the back and chest areas for overall body health.

Other benefits include: improvement in overall health in the body systems; protects the health of the immune system' helps to detoxify the body from harmful substances and toxins.

Eucalyptus Oil

Used to reduce intestinal germs and bacteria that can cause digestive imbalances. Its antibacterial properties aid the immune system in healing these types of infections.

Other benefits include: reduces inflammation throughout the body; relieves muscle pain and soreness

Marjoram Oil

Rich in Cineole that strengthens the immune system, helping to heal intestinal problems. It aids in the prevention of indigestion and helps to promote and maintain a balance in the digestive system.

Other benefits: boosts the immune system; provides relief from muscle pain.

Rosemary Oil

Rosemary is used to promote and maintain a healthy digestive system. It is also an excellent oil for the overall health and proper functioning of the immune system. By promoting the health of the immune system it aids in resolving and healing digestive conditions, as well as other health issues throughout the other systems of the body.

Lavender Oil

Most recognized oil for reducing stress, lavender still has a place in this list. Stress and mental tension will affect the body in adverse ways. Stress can attack every system in the body causing a multitude of physical ailments. Lavender oil has a cooling and soothing affect throughout the body, it relieves tension in the muscles, mind, and yes even the digestive tract. Lavender treats indigestion and stomach pain, and aids in improving the digestive functions.

Diet & Acid Reflux

Though teas and oils can help to ease and resolve the symptoms and causes of many ailments diet is a very essential key to health. We truly are what we eat. When the word diet is used most people flinch with the natural reaction of the fear they will lose their favorite foods. The word should not have this affect on us, but society has chosen to force the idea of “a diet” on us to the extent that it has become a “four letter word”, this is a sad side effect and one that grossly affects our health.

Diet should be looked at in no other terms then how we treat our body and its systems. God made food, and even certain foods, to help us maintain the health of every system within our bodies. When we suggest foods to eat, or avoid, it is generally not with the intention of saying “only eat that food” or “never eat that food again”. When are bodies are suffering from over, or under, indulgence of certain foods health problems will arise, because we have deprived or overfed, our bodies with foods that are essential to health. Diet simply means adding foods that will aid in healing the condition, and avoiding foods that could aid in its continuation, or even worsening, of the condition.

Below is a list of foods that can address this condition. We recommend adding them to what you currently eat. There is also a list of foods that will aggravate the condition that you might want to avoid until you have healed the issue and the digestive system is once again in good working order.

Foods We Recommended to Add to Your Daily Intake

Oatmeal

A food that is high in natural fiber without saturated fat, which is hard to digest, and cholesterol. Adding blueberries or raisins' to a bowl of oatmeal will provide the body with iron and potassium, both which are essential to overall health.

Specific Fruits & Vegetables

Apples and Grapes not only supply natural fiber but are excellent non-citrus providers of vitamin C. Low sodium, saturated fats, and cholesterol. Blackberries and Raspberries also make a good addition.

Fresh papaya and its seeds can be eaten to help with digestion.

Bananas are an old folk remedy for many gastrointestinal problems because they soothe the digestive tract.

Plantains, a close cousin of the banana, contain an enzyme that stimulates mucus production in the lining of the stomach, helping to relieve upset and heartburn.

Eating a handful of raw Carrots makes your stomach and esophagus feel better quickly.

Chewing carrots leads to more saliva production, leads to more enzymes flowing.

This means faster digestion.

Pineapples provide one of the most effective herbal remedies for acid reflux. Pineapples are rich in enzymes, especially in Bromelain, which reduce protein. These enzymes facilitate digestion, reduce the inflammation, and aid healing. Fresh pineapple juice is rich in these enzymes.

Vegetables & Fruits

Make sure you are adding vegetables and fruits to your diet. You should be varying your choices by type and colors. If you use to the same vegetables all the time, consider adding some new ones to bring in the vitamins and minerals you may be lacking for proper digestion. Beans can be classified as a vegetable by some nutritionists and a protein by others. Regardless, they make a good addition to your food choices. By adding the various colors of vegetables and fruits, you are giving your body the vitamins, minerals, and compounds it needs to be healthy.

Just to name a few of their most recognized advantages here is a list that not only pertains to Vegetables but also Fruits:

Red Vegetables: (*Examples: Tomatoes, Watermelon, Papaya, Guava*)

Provides a powerful antioxidant called lycopene.

Green Vegetables: (*Examples: Spinach, Collards, Brussel Sprouts, turnips, cabbage*)

Rich in phytochemicals that keep the body healthy

Leafy greens contain folate (vitamin B)

Orange & Yellow Vegetables: (*Examples: Sweet Potatoes, Mangos, Carrots, Apricots*)

Contain beta carotene, orange colors are high in vitamin C, yellow colors are high in essential vitamins and carotenoids.

Blue & Purple Vegetables: (*Examples: Eggplant, Cabbage, Endive, Grapes, Blueberries*)

Contain flavonoids, phytochemicals, antioxidants, nutrients including, lutein, zeaxanthin, resveratrol, Vitamin C, fiber, flavonoids, ellagic acid, and quercetin.

White Vegetables: (*Examples: Onion, Garlic, Chives, Scallions, Leeks*)

Contain phytochemical allicin, Indoles and sulforaphanes, and Polyphenols,

Spices

Two of the most recognized spices that can be added to foods and teas are Cinnamon and Dill. Cinnamon is an effective antiseptic and a trusted antacid. To use it for settling an acidic stomach and heartburn, toast and butter some raisin bread and spread some cinnamon on it. Chew the bread slowly and thoroughly before swallowing.

Dill, like cinnamon, is a carminative and has been used to calm acid stomachs and soothe the digestive tract. Try crushing a few teaspoons of dill seed and steeping them at least 10 minutes in hot water for a tea.

Proteins

White meats digest easier than red meats, so shifting your eating habits until your digestive system is on track is a good idea. Turkey, chicken, pork are all white meats. Portions should be kept small as meat is one of the hardest food items for the stomach to digest. 3-6 ounces of meat at a meal is your best bet. This actually is the recommended size for any meat, even when healthy.

If you can substitute your “meat” with beans or other proteins a few times a week this would definitely help the digestive system to heal faster.

DON'T FORGET THE WATER

Make sure your body is being supplied enough water, not drinks mixed with water, but just water. It is not only needed for hydration but plays a very large roll in how your food moves through the digestive system. Try to add at least 3-4 glasses of water to your intake each day.

Foods to Avoid

Now we come to the part most folks hate talking about. At present your digestive system is out of balance. Its ability to digest foods is compromised and certain foods are going to aggravate this condition. Keep in mind that avoiding dose not mean you will never taste them again. It simply means that for your health it is best not to eat them right now.

If you give your body the things it needs now to correct the problem, it will heal itself. Your digestive system will balance out and be able to digest your foods efficiently. These foods can be gradually introduced back into your diet. They still can offer nutrients to the body but like with all things should be kept in moderation, so you do not cause another system breakdown.

Below is a list of foods that you should put on hold till your system is healed as currently they will aggravate the condition or overtax the digestive system. For coffee drinkers try to reduce the amount you drink if you cannot go without it. In low amounts caffeine can be beneficial to the body, but in high amounts it can be detrimental. For now, it is an aggravating factor to your condition.

Tomato sauce and other tomato-based products – high-fat foods, such as fast food products, greasy foods, and fried foods -- citrus fruit juices -- soda -- caffeine -- chocolate -- alcohol

