Acid reflux is the term used to describe stomach acid entering the esophagus, which may or may not cause a burning sensation in the middle of the chest behind the breast bone. If it burns, it is referred to as “heart burn”. Some people are more prone to this than others, in particular individuals that may produce more stomach acid. Untreated, this can cause erosion of the esophageal tissue, which can be problematic. Stress can trigger the release of more stomach acid so you may notice it more during those times.

In addition, the following foods or behaviors may trigger these uncomfortable events.

- **Alcohol**
- **Citrus foods or drinks**
- **Acidic foods** such as vinegar, tomatoes, tomato sauce, and spicy foods
- **Fried foods**
- **Large meals** – a very full stomach
- **Lying flat after eating**
- **Chewing gum** – in particular peppermint (not just in gum)
- **Aspirin** or aspirin containing products such as Pepto Bismal™ - which is often taken to help reduce stomach acid
- **Motrin™** or **Ibuprofen** based medications
- **Chocolate**
- **Caffeine**

If “heart burn” is occasional and felt mostly when consuming these foods, limit consumption of these foods. Also try to eat small, well balanced meals rather than larger meals. If laying down after eating, make sure to prop up the upper body slightly so as not to lay flat and, if possible, try to allow a good hour to digest your food before laying down.

Over-the-counter medications such as TUMS™ (calcium carbonate) will help neutralize the acid and give relatively quick relief. You may also wish to try Mylanta™, or its generic counterpart – which is a liquid containing magnesium, that helps coat the esophagus and stomach and also provides relief.

If heart burn is more regular, on a daily basis, then you may wish to consult with your medical provider to see if you are better suited for medications that might have a longer impact. Some signs of regular acid reflux are a regular dry cough when you aren’t sick or feeling as though you need to clear your throat often.

Given that stress can really trigger acid release, learning to manage stress can be incredibly helpful. You may choose to consult with someone in Wellness or CAPS to discuss stress management.