

ADVERTISING FEATURE

# HEALTH & FITNESS

## Change in lifestyle isn't always enough to stop heartburn from occurring

Heartburn affects more than 40 per cent of Canadians and varies in frequency and severity.

Sometimes called the great masquerader, heartburn can be a source of confusion and frustration among those it affects.

Part of the frustration comes from the lack of evidence that lifestyle choices and heartburn are connected.

Some people also feel if they complain about heartburn, they won't receive sympathy from others.

It's almost implied that the problem of heartburn is self-induced, leaving the sufferer feeling alone and unclear about why heartburn affects them and what they can do to make it better.

### WHAT IS HEARTBURN?

Your stomach naturally contains strong acid (about the same strength as the acid in your car's battery). It's there to help your body digest food.

Normally, this acid doesn't cause any discomfort, but problems can start when your system produces too much acid.

For many people, spicy and fried foods can trigger excess acid production, as can overeating and eating too

quickly. This excess acid can irritate the lining of your stomach. When this happens, you experience the burning and discomfort called acid indigestion.

Heartburn is a burning pain you feel in your chest, just behind the breastbone, when acid flows back up into the food pipe (or esophagus).

At the bottom of your esophagus is a trap door that works to block acid from flowing back up. When there is too much acid produced in the stomach, or if the trap door has been weakened, the backflow of acid occurs.

Doctors call this backflow of acid reflux, and it can cause an unpleasant acid or bitter taste in the back of your throat.

### WHAT CAUSES HEARTBURN AND ACID INDIGESTION?

Food and beverage consumption is the most common trigger for heartburn and acid indigestion symptoms.

Certain foods and beverages that contain caffeine, can bring on symptoms of either condition because they affect the lining of the stomach and esophagus, making them less protected from acid.

Heartburn often occurs at night —

especially if you eat soon before going to bed — because lying down doesn't allow for normal gravitational flow of acid. Instead, it backs up into the food pipe.

People who are pregnant, overweight or wear tight-fitting clothes can be frequent sufferers of heartburn as well.


This is because the baby, extra weight or tight clothes places additional pressure on the stomach and weakens the trap door.

While certain lifestyle changes can be made to try to prevent the onset of symptoms, sometimes it isn't enough.

Non-prescription medications such as antacids provide immediate relief from heartburn symptoms, but typically only last about one to three hours. Recently, medications called acid reducers have been made available without a prescription as well.


This medication reduces the amount of acid produced in the stomach and provides effective relief for up to nine hours.

For details on the causes, symptoms and treatments for heartburn and acid indigestion, call the Zantac Heartburn Information Centre at 1-800-661-4659.



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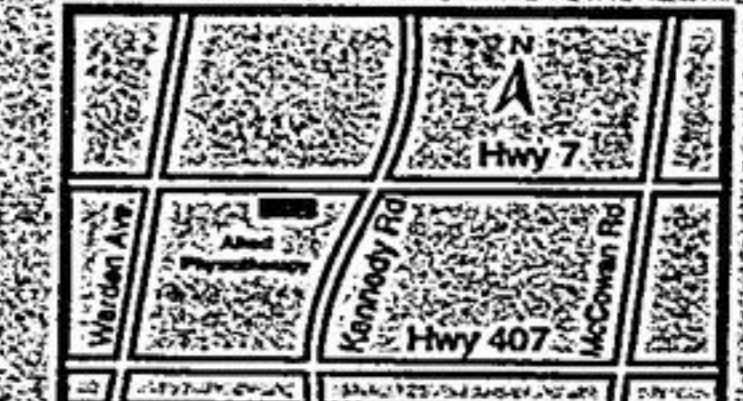


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