

# Qi Gong for Acid Reflux

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According to some estimates, 7 percent of Americans have heartburn daily and 14 percent have it at least once a week. Heartburn may be a symptom of a more serious, chronic condition known as gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. A 1994 US

Department of Health report states that about seven million people in the US alone suffer from GERD. Besides heartburn, other symptoms of GERD could be sour or bitter taste in mouth, difficulty swallowing, persistent cough, hoarseness, upset stomach, or chest pain. If any of these symptoms persist, you should see your doctor to rule out any other problems.

There have been many western medical studies looking at the causes of GERD and these studies can offer the following helpful suggestions for lifestyle changes to improve your heartburn. If you smoke, stop. Do not drink alcohol. Lose weight if needed. Eat small meals. Wear loose-fitting clothes. Avoid lying down for 3 hours after a meal. Raise the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches by putting blocks of wood under the bedposts, just using extra pillows will not help. Keep a diary of GERD symptoms to see if there is a pattern of certain foods or activities that you could then avoid. Specific foods are known to increase problems with heartburn: citrus fruits, chocolate, drinks with caffeine, fatty and fried foods, garlic, onions, mint flavorings, spicy foods, and tomato-based foods.

The emotional aspects of GERD should not be overlooked. We all know that stress can give someone an upset stomach, but what is the mechanism? Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) recognizes the emotional aspect of each organ in the body. According to TCM, stomach problems relate to worry or ruminating. When we think about the same topic over and over again, the stomach energy gets disturbed and when the stomach energy is disturbed, it can be very difficult to stop thinking about a particular topic. It is very important to limit the amount of time you spend pondering the same issue. Try to find other activities to keep your

attention on during the day. At bed time, you could listen to a meditation tape instead of doing the usual intense review and planning sessions that most people do while lying awake in bed.

There are some very useful Chinese remedies for heartburn. Aloe vera juice can be purchased at most local grocery stores and is very healing for the whole digestive tract. You can take 1-4 oz. daily, mixed with juice or water. I've found the grape juice does a wonderful job of making it more palatable. If you get any trouble with diarrhea, cut back on the aloe vera. There is a terrific Chinese remedy called Curing Pill that you can get from your acupuncturist or a local Chinese grocer (Lee's Market on Jefferson or West Lake Foods on Commerce). Follow the directions on the package.

The following Qi Gong exercise is very helpful with GERD as well as all problems in the abdomen such as liver, gall bladder, stomach, spleen, pancreas, intestines, reproductive organs, PMS, autoimmune problems, weight, fatigue, diarrhea, and constipation. Emotionally it helps anger, frustration, stress, depression, anxiety, and feeling "stuck".

## Springtime Qi Gong:

Start with your feet shoulder width apart. Your hands move so that you are holding an imaginary ball in front of you with the left hand on top and the right underneath with the palms facing each other. Then inhale and raise the right hand up, palm up to ceiling and push the left hand down to waist on center line of body, palm down. Feel good stretch in ribs on the right and compression in the ribs on the left like you were squeezing out a sponge, relax the wrists. Exhale and inhale again. Exhaling, palms turn to face each other, relax right arm down and hold the ball again, right hand on top, in front of stomach. Relax completely. Inhale and raise left hand up to ceiling, push right hand down to waist on center line of body. Feel stretch in ribs on left and compression on the right. Exhale and inhale again. Exhaling, palms face each other, relax left arm down and hold a ball, left hand on top, in front of stomach. Relax. Repeat this exercise as many times in a row as feels good and do it three times or more per day.



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