

8 Stretches and Exercises That Help Improve Heartburn/Acid Reflux

Frequently, one of the first suggestions for people with acid reflux is to lose weight, but it's not always as simple as going for a run. Unfortunately, intense physical activity can agitate acid in the stomach, which can then overflow into the esophagus and make exercising unpleasant or even painful. In order to alleviate heartburn, you should opt for activities that won't exacerbate symptoms.

Another thing to keep in mind when starting a new workout is that drinking water during any physical activity is beneficial. Not only does it keep you hydrated and help keep you cool, but it can also assist in clearing the esophagus, which may help reduce painful symptoms of acid reflux. So make sure to keep a water bottle handy and take small sips throughout your workout.

Before beginning any workout, make sure you stretch for three to five minutes to avoid pain or injury.

Two Chair Stretch

For quick relief, you'll need two chairs and, ideally, a soft mat or towel. To get set up, place the chairs a few feet apart facing each other but close enough so that your wrists will be on top of the seat, and place the mat between the two chairs to support your knees.

When you're ready, kneel on the mat and stretch your arms out to the sides so they hover over the chairs. Next, place your palms face down on the seats and lower your upper body so that your head and chest are below the line of your arms.

Let your head hang down so you're not holding tension in your neck as you move your upper body towards the ground, feeling the stretch in your chest and shoulders. Your elbows should stretch the entire time. Hold this position for two to three minutes. To come out of the stretch, slowly raise your upper body and bring in your arms.

Breathing Exercise

Make sure you're sitting down or are standing comfortably. Inhale deeply, then blow out all the air quickly with force until you don't feel any air left in your lungs. After exhaling, close your mouth and nose with your fingers to block the airway. Now, move as if you're trying to breathe in

fresh air, even though your mouth and nose are closed. Keep doing this move as long as you can.

When you're no longer able to keep it up, stop blocking your mouth and nose, and breathe back in normally. Do this a few times in a row to relax the chest muscles.

Forward Stretch

This one requires you to sit on the floor or another sturdy flat surface. Start with your legs together straight out in front of you. Put your hands on your thighs and take a deep breath in. As you exhale, slowly start moving your upper body forward, making sure to keep your spine as straight as you can.

Continue leaning forward until you can't anymore. If you can, hook your fingers onto your big toes or the soles of your feet, otherwise keep your hands stretching forward on your legs. Breathe deeply for one to two minutes before slowly lifting your body into a sitting position again.

Reclining Butterfly Stretch

Laying down on a mat, start by gently moving your ankles together and walking your feet back towards your pelvis. Let your knees drift down towards the ground, adjusting so that the bottoms of your feet are touching and your legs form a general diamond shape.

Bring your arms slightly out to your sides, releasing tension from your upper body, and breathe. Do this for one to two minutes. To come out of this pose, move your hands to the outside of your thighs and press up, bringing your legs together again.

Yoga

The practice of yoga is about moving your body in a mindful way, which is ideal for those suffering from any level of heartburn. Being able to listen to what your body needs allows you to have flexibility, modifying the poses as needed, and using whatever is most beneficial to you. Yoga melds stretches with light core and strength exercises, which can open up your chest and reduce symptoms.

Weight Lifting

Some types of strength training can cause flare-ups, but certain things can still work for you. Particularly, muscle-focusing moves or gym machines that don't stimulate your lower abdomen can let you isolate muscles without causing or worsening heartburn.

Swimming

Water is great at creating natural resistance for the body, so when you're swimming, it's like you're moving weight around without actually lifting weights. Instead, it's a full-body workout that engages muscles in your arms, legs, and core without the stress other endurance training causes.

If available to you, water aerobics can also be a great form of exercise for those with heartburn since your body is upright most of the time.

Walking

Walking is an underrated form of exercise. It's low-impact, so you're less likely to strain muscles or joints, it improves circulation and posture, and it has as many mental benefits as it does physical. For some people, walking consistently (especially if you incorporate interval training) can be as beneficial as running.

Alleviate Heartburn with Low-Impact Exercises

Exercising is an effective way to help ease painful heartburn symptoms. Stretches and moderate exercises work to move your muscles and limit discomfort, and it's as easy as listening to your body.

Fighting acid reflux can be difficult across all aspects of life, but maintaining physical activity is important to keeping you healthy. If you're an avid runner or love to play basketball, it can be hard to think of switching to a lower-impact exercise, but protecting yourself from health issues is important. Try talking to your doctor about what other adjustments can be made to make sure your routine works for you and your needs.

As with anything, being consistent with your routine will help you know what to expect and be able to spot the signs of a flare-up. Now that you're equipped with these low-impact physical activities, you have all of the tools to choose a workout that works for you.