



Chrisana Ogilvie-McDaniel, MD, Thomas A. Scott, MD and
Heather Vas, PA-C
Allergy and Asthma
3311 E. Murdock
Wichita, KS 67208

Patient Information Sheet On Reflux (Laryngopharyngeal Reflux)

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux (LPR) Can Cause:

- Hoarseness
- Trouble swallowing
- Too much throat mucus
- A “lump” in the throat
- Chronic cough
- Heartburn

What Is Reflux And What Is LPR?

The term REFLUX comes from a Greek word that means “backflow.” It usually refers to “the back flow of stomach contents.” Normally, once the things that we eat reach the stomach, digestion should begin without the contents of the stomach coming back up again, i.e.; refluxing. Some people have reflux just into the esophagus (the swallowing tube that joins the throat to the stomach). If this happens frequently, a person may develop heartburn, (a painful, burning sensation in the chest). In some people, however, the backflow from the stomach goes all the way up to the throat. That is LPR.

The term LARYNGOPHARYNGEAL REFLUX (LPR) refers to the backflow of food or stomach acid all the way back up into the larynx (the voice box) or the pharynx (the throat). LPR can occur during the day or night, even if a person hasn’t eaten. Not everyone who has LPR will have heartburn.

Many People With LPR Don’t Have Heartburn...Why Is That?

Some people with LPR have a lot of heartburn, but usually people who have LPR don’t have heartburn very often. In fact, half of the people who have LPR never have heartburn at all. This is because the material that refluxes does not stay in the esophagus for very long. In other words, the acid does not have enough time to irritate the esophagus. However if even small amounts of refluxate come all of the way up into the throat, other problems can occur. This is because, compared to the esophagus, the voice box and throat are much more sensitive to injury and irritation from stomach acid.

How Do I Know If I Have LPR?

Chronic hoarseness, throat clearing, and cough, as well as a feeling of a lump in the throat or difficulty swallowing may be signs that you have LPR. Some people do have heartburn, too.

Some people have hoarseness that comes and goes, and others have a problem with too much nose and throat drainage, that is, too much mucus or phlegm. If you have any of these symptoms, and especially if you smoke, you should ask your doctor about LPR. The specialist who most often treats people with LPR is the Otolaryngologist (Ear, Nose, and Throat Physician). If your doctor thinks that you could have LPR, he or she will probably perform a throat examination first and look at the voice box and the lower throat. If this area looks swollen and/or red, you may have LPR. At that point, your doctor may order some tests or recommend specific treatment.