Reflux Management for Singers

01

Identify your symptoms:

Reflux can be broadly categorised into two types: GERD or LPR. GERD typically has more obvious symptoms like burning in the chest, a bitter taste in your mouth, and even regurgitation. In contrast, LPR symptoms are more subtle; these include frequent throat clearing, excess phlegm in the morning, a feeling of a lump in the throat, hoarseness, and vocal fatigue.

02

Identify your triggers:

These can be diet or lifestyle related. Common triggers include:

Dietary

- Chilli & Spicy foods
- Tomato & Tomato Sauce
- Onion & Garlic
- Capsicum
- Citrus
- Peppermint/Mint
- Coffee/Tea/Chocolate
- Carbonated Drinks
- Alcohol

Lifestyle

- Eating or drinking within 2-3 hours before lying down
- Eating large portions
- Inconsistent meal times
- Tight clothing around the waist or chest
- Exercising directly after meals
- Excess bodyweight
- Excessive stress levels

To identify your personal triggers, consider keeping a journal of your symptoms and potential triggers to identify patterns. You could also try excluding all common dietary triggers from your diet, then re-introducing them one at a time.

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03

Reduce and mitigate triggers:
Once you identify your major triggers, try to reduce or eliminate them where possible. You may not need to cut out all triggers, but consider the cumulative impact they may have on your voice, particularly during periods of high voice use.
As well as avoiding triggers, consider using mitigating strategies, such as:

- Slightly raising the head of your bed or sleep on a wedge pillow
- Drinking alkaline water, particularly before meals
- Taking an alginate treatment such as Gaviscon liquid, particularly after meals and before bed. Note: It's recommended to wait 2 hours between taking an alginate and taking any other oral medications, as absorption may be impacted.

04

Seek medical advice:
If you have ongoing voice symptoms, speak to your doctor about potential next steps. They may refer you to a laryngologist (specialist ENT) to visualise your vocal folds and check for evidence of reflux, or a gastroenterologist to help you identify the causes and potential treatments for your specific case.

Note: Although medications (PPIs or H2 blockers) may be necessary in some cases, they may not resolve your voice problems unless accompanied by diet and lifestyle change.

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