Is it really just Heartburn?
10% of people suffer with Heartburn every week

Heartburn

Heartburn is a burning feeling in your chest caused by reflux of your stomach contents (including acid and bile) travelling back up into the tube that connects your mouth to your stomach which is known as your oesophagus. You would not normally notice reflux but if it happens regularly symptoms may start to appear.

These include:-

- a burning feeling
- pain just under your breastbone or in your chest
- belching
- an acid taste in your mouth
- a hoarse voice
**What exactly is Barrett’s?**

Barrett’s is a change in the cells lining the oesophagus and is diagnosed by taking small tissue samples (biopsies) from the oesophagus. When these biopsies are examined under the microscope the cells lining the lower end of the oesophagus, which are normally layered like the skin for protection, have changed to look like those of the stomach or intestine which are more used to handling acid and bile.

**How is Barrett’s treated?**

It is normally treated with acid suppressant medicine to control reflux symptoms. If there are more advanced changes to the cells then treatment is usually recommended to remove the abnormal lining.

**10% of people with heartburn Unknowingly have Barrett’s**

Barrett’s is sometimes referred to as a pre-cancerous condition. This means that people who have Barrett’s are more likely to develop cancer of the oesophagus than people who do not have Barrett’s but this does not happen to the majority of Barrett’s patients.
Can Cancer be avoided?

If you have Barrett’s oesophagus diagnosed, it is recommended that you have regular check-ups to make sure that if, in the unlikely event cancer does develop, it can be treated while it is at a curable stage.

Who do I contact for help?

Support for sufferers and those close to them is very important to us. We aim to provide support in a number of ways.

• Try using our online ‘Ask a Doctor’ service & information where you can compare notes with other people with similar problems

Remember that your GP is always available to you. If you have concerns please contact your GP for support.

Cancer of the Oesophagus

Oesophageal cancer is mostly of two types. One type is adenocarcinoma which usually appears in the lower oesophagus at the junction with the stomach. This type is linked to Barrett’s oesophagus, even if this has not already been diagnosed. The other type is squamous cell carcinoma which tends to affect the upper part of the oesophagus and is more strongly linked with smoking.
Change your future, don’t ignore long term persistent heartburn see your doctor
Heartburn Cancer UK

HCUK is a national charity having amalgamated with the McCord Fund which was founded in memory of Michael McCord who died from oesophageal cancer in 2002. Michael’s death was preventable had he been aware of the danger of long term persistent heartburn and appropriate investigation. He is one of thousands who die each year unnecessarily.

Raising awareness, changing the future

HCUK is:-

- Increasing awareness of risk factors amongst the public and medical professionals
- Improving standards of medical care to increase early detection
- Raising funds to support initiatives and trials designed to reduce/prevent heartburn and cut the risk of progression to cancer
- Raising funds to educate and motivate the public and Health Care Professionals
- Increasing awareness among policymakers, ultimately to achieve a warning on all over the counter antacids and anti-reflux medication sold in the UK by 2020
“Mum’s had indigestion for years, but it’s now getting painful. She can’t just hope it goes away. We have to persuade her to see a Doctor”

Call 01256 338 668
www.heartburncanceruk.org
Our Support Network

We have very active Support Networks in Cambridge - HCUK East Anglia and London - based in University College London Hospital (UCLH)

Through the Support Network we aim to provide support, raise awareness and fundraise.

• Through our website fellow Barrett’s sufferers and like minded people can find information from previous sufferers which can be very helpful when you are concerned about your condition. See our website www.heartburncanceruk.org

• Fundraise in any way you wish. We have had marathon runners, beard growing initiatives, trekking to Everest Base Camp. Not only does this raise money but also raises awareness, which is just as important.

• We have leaflets, posters and flyers for distribution in gastroenterology departments, GP surgeries and pharmacies. Perhaps you could help distribute them?

• Please support us in any way and make a difference to other people’s lives. Raise awareness so the rise in oesophageal cancer is stemmed.

• Mimi McCord (Chair of Heartburn Cancer UK) is either a phone call or email away and she can help guide you in the right direction.

Tel: 01256 338 668   Email: mimi.mccord@heartburncanceruk.org

We would like to thank the Medical Trustees, Lay Members, Nurses and Patients who have helped with the content of this booklet. Particular thanks to Professor Laurence Lovat, Consultant Gastroenterologist at UCL Hospital and independent medical advisor to HCUK, for his advice and help in producing this patient information booklet.
What is it with this heartburn when I bend over and/or exert myself? I’m young, fit and take care of myself. Can’t be anything serious can it? I’ll just take more medicine!”

Call 01256 338 668
www.heartburncanceruk.org
Help us by donating now!

HCUK relies on public support to do their vital work.

Donating to HCUK is easy.

You can donate:

- on-line through justgiving.com and virgin money,
- by cheque made payable to: Heartburn Cancer UK
- through a payroll giving scheme,
- with regular standing orders,
- as part of your legacy,
- or every time you shop online.

If you are a current UK taxpayer we would encourage you to complete a gift aid declaration which allows us to reclaim the tax so a donation of £10 is worth £12.50 to us.

Registered Charity No. 1136413

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