DR. MARLÉ VAN DER MERWE
MEDICAL AESTHETICS

DR. MARLÉ'S REFLUX/GERD(GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE): IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO/REMEMBER

VERY IMPORTANT - STOP DRINKING COFFEE ON AN EMPTY STOMACH AND IN THE MORNINGS. IF YOU HAVE TO DRINK COFFEE STICK TO ONE CUT A DAY AFTER LUNCH. STOP SMOKING OR VAPING.

✔ DO (Recommended Practices)

Meal Habits

- **Eat small, frequent meals:** Large meals increase stomach pressure, forcing acid upward.
- **Chew thoroughly and eat slowly:** Helps digestive enzymes break down food easily.
- **Stay upright after eating:** Remain standing or seated upright for at least 2 to 3 hours after a meal.

Timing & Sleep

- **Stop eating 3 hours before bed:** Ensures your stomach is mostly empty when you lie down.
- Elevate the head of your bed: Raise the head of your bed or mattress. (using bed risers or a wedge pillow—extra regular pillows are not recommended as they only bend your neck).
- **Sleep on your left side:** Positional anatomical alignment helps keep the junction between the esophagus and stomach above the level of gastric acid.

Lifestyle & Clothing

- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Excess weight puts pressure on the abdomen and lower esophageal sphincter (LES).
- **Take medications as prescribed:** Take acid-reducing medications (e.g., PPIs or H2 blockers) exactly as directed—often 30-60 minutes before breakfast.

✘ DON'T (Triggers & Behaviors to Avoid)

Food & Beverage Triggers

- Avoid common trigger foods:
  - High-fat or fried foods
  - Spicy foods, onions, and garlic
  - Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons) and tomatoes/tomato sauces
  - Chocolate, mint, and peppermint
- Avoid trigger beverages:
  - Carbonated drinks (soda, sparkling water)
  - Caffeinated coffee and energy drinks
  - Alcohol
- **Avoid extreme food temperatures:** Extremely hot or freezing cold liquids can irritate the esophagus.

Habits & Actions

- **Don't lie down right after eating:** Avoid reclining or taking post-meal naps.
- **Don't bend over or exercise right after meals:** Avoid vigorous exercise or heavy lifting immediately after eating.
- **Don't smoke or use tobacco:** Nicotine relaxes the lower esophageal sphincter, allowing stomach acid to leak into the esophagus.
- **Don't overuse ABC painrelievers:** NSAIDs (like ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin) can irritate the stomach lining. Always consult your doctor before taking them.

When to Contact Your Doctor (Red Flag Symptoms)

Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Difficulty or pain when swallowing (dysphagia/odynnphagia)
- Unintended weight loss
- Persistent vomiting or blood in vomit (looks like dark coffee grounds)
- Black or tarry stools
- Chest pain (especially if accompanied by pain radiating to the jaw, neck, or arm, shortness of breath, or sweating—seek emergency medical care immediately)
- Symptoms that persist despite taking prescribed medication