Reflux Pattern Checklist

Tired of tracking your foods and getting nowhere?

Most people track *single* foods, like coffee or onion. But the same food can bring on reflux one day and not the next. Reflux often follows the *whole meal* and the *circumstances* around it: how much and how fast you ate, how late you ate, and what you did afterwards.

The checklist below gives you clues to your reflux pattern. First steps are outlined on page 2. If you have a mixed pattern you can explore it in more detail by keeping a reflux episode log on page 3.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

1. Think about your last few bad reflux episodes and tick everything that usually applies to you.
2. Go with your first answers.
3. Count the ticks in each group, then turn to page 2.

A Big or fast meals



- ☐ **Large meal, or ate until very full** (e.g. buffet, restaurant main plus sides)
- ☐ **Large amount of food and drink together** (e.g. big meal with a large drink)
- ☐ **Ate quickly** (e.g. lunch at your desk or while on the run)
- ☐ **Several courses** (e.g. entree + main + dessert)
- ☐ **Long gap without food before the meal** (e.g. skipped breakfast)

Ticks: / 5

B Late eating & lying down



- ☐ **Large evening meal** (e.g. big dinner, restaurant meal, takeaway)
- ☐ **Ate within 2–3 hours of going to bed** (e.g. dinner at 9 pm)
- ☐ **Late-night food or snack** (e.g. supper, dessert, snack in front of TV)
- ☐ **Lay down soon after eating** (e.g. couch or bed after dinner)
- ☐ **Bent over or exercised hard soon after eating** (e.g. gardening or working out)

Ticks: / 5

C Rich meals



- ☐ **Fried food or takeaway** (e.g. chips, burgers, or fried chicken)
- ☐ **Creamy or cheesy meal** (e.g. carbonara, lasagne, creamy curry)
- ☐ **Pizza, pastry or other rich baked foods** (e.g. pies, sausage rolls)
- ☐ **Rich dessert** (e.g. cheesecake, ice cream, chocolate cake)
- ☐ **Several rich foods in one meal** (e.g. pizza + garlic bread + dessert)

Ticks: / 5

D Drinks and irritants



- ☐ **Coffee or other caffeinated drinks** (e.g. coffee, tea, or energy drinks)
- ☐ **Alcohol** (e.g. wine, beer, spirits)
- ☐ **Fizzy drinks or sparkling water** (e.g. soft drink, mineral water)
- ☐ **Chocolate or peppermint** (e.g. a chocolate bar, mints, or peppermint tea)
- ☐ **Spicy or acidic foods** (e.g. chilli, tomato-based pasta, orange juice, or vinegar)

Ticks: / 5

E Gas, bloating and bowels



- ☐ **Bloating or a swollen belly** (e.g. waistband feels tight after eating)
- ☐ **Frequent belching** (e.g. burping a lot after the meal)
- ☐ **Felt full for hours after eating** (e.g. food felt like it was sitting there)
- ☐ **A large serve of onion, garlic, or legumes** (e.g. bean chilli or garlic bread)
- ☐ **Constipation or irregular bowel movements** (e.g. fewer toilet trips or straining)

Ticks: / 5

Also noticed : ☐ Stressful or rushed meal. ☐ Medication or supplement taken around this time.

⚠ **See your GP first if you have:** difficulty or pain swallowing, persistent vomiting, black or bloody stools, unexplained weight loss.

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Your Pattern and First Step

Start with the group where you ticked the most. Did you tick many items in more than one group? That is common. Pick one group, make 1–2 small changes for 1–2 weeks, then move on to the next.

A Big or fast meals



A very full stomach makes it easier for stomach contents to be pushed back up into the oesophagus.

TRY FIRST

- Stop at comfortably full, not very full.
- Have a small snack if you go a long time without food, so you are not starving at your next meal.
- Eat more slowly and chew well.

B Late eating and lying down



Lying down or bending soon after eating makes it easier for stomach contents to travel up, especially after a big meal.

TRY FIRST

- Finish eating at least 3 hours before bed.
- Make the evening meal your smaller meal.
- Stay upright after eating; a gentle walk can be a good option.

C Rich meals



Rich, fatty meals leave the stomach more slowly and can loosen the valve at its top.

TRY FIRST

- Keep it to one rich item per meal rather than several together.
- Have smaller serves of rich meals, earlier in the day where you can.

D Drinks and irritants



Some drinks and foods can irritate the oesophagus or loosen the valve. What affects you may differ from what affects other people.

TRY FIRST

- Change one at a time. Pick the item you think is most likely to be a trigger.
- Try reducing it for 1–2 weeks and see if there is a change. If not, add it back and test the next one.

E Gas, bloating and bowels



Excess gas, bloating, and slower bowel transit can increase pressure in the abdomen, which may trigger reflux.

TRY FIRST

- Notice which foods bring on bloating most often and try a smaller serve.
- Eat at consistent times, eat slowly and chew well.
- If symptoms are regular for you, discuss with your GP.

CHECK IN AFTER 1-2 WEEKS

Test changes one at a time so you know what makes a difference. Is your reflux less often, less strong, or the same? That tells you whether to keep going or move to the next group. If nothing stands out, or the changes aren't helping, don't restrict your diet further. A more structured dietary or medical assessment is the next step.

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Reflux Episode Log

Want to check your pattern?
Not sure about your answers, or have a mixed pattern? Fill in your next 5 reflux episodes and see whether the same groups keep appearing. Write the whole meal and not just single foods.

How long after eating: • within 30 min • 30–90 min • 1–3 hours • more than 3 hours • overnight

Severity: • 0 none • 1 mild • 2 moderate • 3 severe

#	Date / time	What I ate and drank beforehand	How long after eating?	Severity (0 – 3)	Groups that applied (A–E)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

What kept appearing?

Do the same letters keep showing up? Those are the groups to work on first (page 2).

When to get checked

This checklist is an educational tool and cannot diagnose the cause of your reflux.
See your GP if your reflux is new, persistent, or worsening. Seek prompt medical advice if you have difficulty or pain swallowing, persistent vomiting, black or bloody stools, unexplained weight loss, or other concerning symptoms.

Need personalised help?

Bring this to a consultation and we'll go through it together, or request a call.
SMS 0414 994958

Book a consultation

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