



The Reflux Relief Guide

Find your reflux pattern

Eat with confidence and comfort





WELCOME TO THE REFLUX RELIEF GUIDE

Your guide to understanding your reflux, choosing the right foods, and eating with more comfort.

If you've been feeling unsure what to eat, avoiding foods, or frustrated by meals that leave you uncomfortable, you're not alone. Reflux often feels unpredictable - one day something works, the next it doesn't. But in most cases, it isn't random. It follows patterns.

This guide will help you identify your reflux pattern and apply simple, practical changes to your food and eating habits. Rather than cutting more and more foods, you'll learn how to make targeted adjustments that actually make a difference.

By the end, you'll know what to eat, how to structure your meals, and what to focus on based on your symptoms - so you can eat with more confidence and comfort.

Here's how the guide is structured:

YOUR REFLUX GUIDE AT A GLANCE

- **Understanding Your Reflux** – learn what's driving your symptoms beyond just acid
- **Find Your Reflux Pattern** – identify the pattern behind your symptoms
- **Using the Food Lists** – your main tool to choose foods with confidence as your symptoms improve
- **Eating Strategies for Your Reflux Pattern** – adjust how and when you eat
- **Reflux-Friendly Meal Plan** – see how it all comes together in practice
- **Moving Forward** – build confidence and reduce flare-ups over time

UNDERSTANDING YOUR REFLUX

Reflux occurs when the valve between your stomach and oesophagus - the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) - doesn't close properly. This allows stomach acid and pepsin (a digestive enzyme), to move upward and irritate the oesophagus. Eating acidic foods can activate pepsin, making symptoms worse. Some foods may also weaken the LES, increasing the risk of reflux.

However, reflux symptoms aren't just about acid. They can also be influenced by pressure in the stomach, how quickly food is digested, and how sensitive the oesophagus is at the time. Certain foods and eating habits can trigger symptoms - for example by increasing acidity, slowing digestion, or relaxing the lower oesophageal sphincter.

What to expect when you get it right

When your food choices and eating habits align with your reflux pattern, you may notice:

- **Less discomfort after meals** - reduce irritation, burning, pressure or fullness
- **More predictable symptoms** - fewer flare-ups and less guesswork
- **Improved digestion** - better tolerance of meals and less post-meal discomfort
- **More confidence with food** - knowing what works for your body
- **Better day-to-day comfort** - including improved sleep and energy

These changes often happen gradually with consistent, targeted adjustments - rather than removing more and more foods.

FIND YOUR REFLUX PATTERN

Not all reflux is the same.

Symptoms can feel unpredictable - one day something is fine, the next it isn't. But in most cases, reflux follows patterns.

Understanding your pattern helps you focus on what will make the biggest difference.

Before identifying your pattern, it can help to track your meals and symptoms for a few days. This allows you to see how your symptoms relate to *when you eat, how full you feel, and when symptoms occur*.

Use the Food & Symptom Tracker for at least 5–7 days, then use the guide below to identify your pattern.

Use the Blue, Orange and Red food lists (separate sheet) as your guide.

Pattern 1: Evening Load Reflux

You might notice:

- Symptoms worse after dinner
- Eating late or large evening meals
- Reflux when lying down or during sleep

What's driving it:

Too much food in the stomach at night increases pressure and makes reflux more likely.

Focus on:

- Lighter dinners
- Finishing meals at least 3 hours before bed
- Shifting more food earlier in the day

Pattern 2: Sensitive / Irritated Reflux

You might notice:

- Sensitivity or irritation in the chest, throat, or upper abdomen (sometimes burning)
- Strong reactions to acidic or trigger foods (e.g. coffee, tomato, citrus)
- Symptoms flare during stress or when run down

What's driving it:

An irritated oesophagus that reacts more easily to acidic foods and triggers.

Focus on:

- Using Blue List foods as your base
- Avoiding Red List foods during flare-ups
- Keeping meals simple and soothing

Pattern 3: Slow Digestion Reflux

You might notice:

- Heaviness or fullness after meals
- Food feeling like it “sits” for hours
- Symptoms worse after fatty or larger meals

What’s driving it:

Slower stomach emptying increases pressure and allows stomach contents to move upward.

Focus on:

- Smaller, more frequent meals
- Reducing high-fat and heavy meals
- Keeping meals simple and balanced

Pattern 4: Bloating & Pressure Reflux

You might notice:

- Bloating or visible abdominal distension
- Burping or pressure after meals
- Reflux symptoms later in the day
- Symptoms triggered by certain foods or drinks

What’s driving it:

Gas and abdominal pressure can push stomach contents upward, triggering reflux.

This can be influenced by

- Carbonated drinks (sparkling water, soft drinks)
- Legumes (lentils, chickpeas)
- Larger amounts of cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage)
- Eating quickly or large meal volumes

Focus on:

- Reducing fizzy drinks
- Keeping portions of legumes and cruciferous vegetables small
- Choosing cooked, easy-to-digest meals
- Eating slowly and avoiding large portions

You may relate to more than one pattern

You may relate to more than one pattern — that’s normal.

As your symptoms change, you can use the tracker again to reassess your pattern.

USING THE FOOD LISTS

These food lists support the reflux patterns outlined earlier, helping you make more targeted food choices. Foods are grouped into three categories based on acidity (pH level) and other factors known to influence reflux.

- **Blue List** - Eat freely. These foods are the least likely to trigger reflux.
- **Orange List** - Use caution. These foods may trigger reflux in some people.
- **Red List** - Avoid. These foods are more likely to cause reflux symptoms.

While acidity is a key factor, the lists also consider other properties that can affect reflux (explained later in the guide). Use the lists to support your reflux pattern - not strict rules. Your pattern and tolerance will differ from others and may change over time. As your symptoms improve, you may be able to reintroduce foods.

Low-Acid Foods

The Blue List: Mildly Acidic to Mildly Alkaline Foods

These foods have a higher pH (closer to neutral or alkaline) and are least likely to trigger reflux. They form the foundation of a reflux-friendly diet and should be included daily. Examples:

- **Vegetables:** Spinach, zucchini, green beans, lettuce
- **Fruits:** Rockmelon, honeydew, pears
- **Grains:** Brown rice, quinoa, whole-grain bread
- **Nuts and Seeds:** Almond milk, chia seeds

The Orange List: Moderately Acidic Foods

These foods are moderately acidic and may activate pepsin, which can contribute to reflux symptoms. However, many people can tolerate them when combined with Blue List foods. If your symptoms are mild or improving, try small amounts as a part of a balanced meal built on Blue List ingredients. Examples:

- **Vegetables:** Carrots, cucumber
- **Proteins:** Chicken, salmon
- **Fats:** Avocado, cashews

The Red List: Highly Acidic Foods

These foods are highly acidic and are best avoided, especially during the healing phase. They are more likely to trigger reflux and worsen symptoms. Examples:

- **Vegetables:** Tomato products
- **Fruits:** Citrus fruit and juices
- **Beverages:** Coffee
- **Condiments:** Sauces and vinegars
- **Fermented or preserved foods:** Pickles, vinegar-based preserves

Common Triggers and Simple Swaps

Reflux can be influenced by more than just acidic foods.

Certain foods may trigger symptoms depending on your reflux pattern - for example, by increasing stomach pressure, slowing digestion, or irritating the oesophagus.

Understanding this helps you make more targeted changes, rather than removing more and more foods.

These are common examples, but individual tolerance can vary.

Below are some common triggers and practical swaps to help you manage symptoms without feeling overly restricted.

1. Chocolate

- **Why Avoid It?:** Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine, which can relax the lower oesophageal sphincter (LES) and allow stomach acid to rise. The high fat content can also worsen symptoms.
- **Swap:** Try **carob** with plant-based milks like almond or coconut milk, which are less acidic than dairy.

2. Alcohol

- **Why Avoid It?:** Alcohol, especially wine, beer, and cocktails, can relax the LES, increase stomach acid production, and irritate the oesophagus lining.
- **Swap:** While avoiding alcohol is ideal, vodka and gin are generally less acidic than wine. If consumed, dilute with water or a non-citrus mixer to reduce irritation.

3. Oily or Fried Foods

- **Why Avoid Them?:** High-fat foods slow digestion, keep food in the stomach longer, and relax the lower oesophageal sphincter (LES), increasing the risk of reflux.
- **Swap:** Choose baked or grilled versions of your favourites. Use small amounts of healthy fats like olive oil or avocado oil, and pair them with low-acid foods in a balanced meal.

4. Carbonated Beverages

- **Why Avoid Them?** The gas from carbonated drinks can cause bloating and increase stomach pressure, which may put pressure on the LES causing it to open and lead to reflux.
- **Swap:** Choose still water, herbal teas or coconut water, which are hydrating and naturally low in acid.

5. High-Fat Dairy Products

- **Why Avoid Them?:** Cream, full-fat milk, and cheese can be problematic due to their fat content and potential to trigger reflux in sensitive individuals.
- **Swap:** Use plant-based milks like almond, coconut, or oat. For a creamy texture, try coconut yoghurt or low-fat Greek yoghurt, if tolerated.

6. Spicy Foods

- **Why Avoid Them?** Chilli, cayenne, and hot sauces can irritate the oesophagus. Capsaicin, the compound responsible for heat in chilli, may also slow down digestion and prolong stomach emptying.
- **Swap:** Flavour meals with mild herbs and spices like basil, parsley, oregano, or ginger. Turmeric adds anti-inflammatory properties and is gentle on the stomach. For a little spice, paprika or cumin can provide flavour without being as harsh as chili-based spices.

Avoiding these trigger foods - and swapping them for gentler options - can help reduce symptoms and support long-term healing. With a few adjustments, you can still enjoy satisfying meals in comfort.

EATING STRATEGIES FOR YOUR REFLUX PATTERN

Now that you've identified your reflux pattern and have the food lists to guide your choices, the next step is **how you eat**.

What you eat matters - but how you eat can be just as important. These strategies can help reduce discomfort, improve digestion, and support your specific pattern.

Start with the strategies most relevant to your symptoms, then adjust as you go.

1. Eat Small, Frequent Meals

This is particularly helpful for **slow digestion or bloating and pressure-related reflux**.

- Smaller meals reduce pressure on your stomach and help prevent reflux.
- Aim for three small meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and one or two light snacks daily.
- This helps maintain energy and comfort without overeating.

2. Begin with Blue List (Alkaline) Foods

This approach works well for **sensitive or irritated reflux**, where simpler, lower-acid foods are better tolerated.

Organising your meals by course can help minimise reflux and support digestion.

- **Start your meal** with an alkaline drink or food, such as a small glass of alkaline water or vegetable juice.
- **Entree:** Choose Blue List vegetables like a leafy green salad (no vinegar or tomato) or veggie rice paper rolls (without chilli sauce).
- **Main meal:** Combine Blue List items such as chicken, avocado, brown rice, with small amounts of Orange List foods such as quinoa or fresh tomato (if tolerated).
- **Dessert:** Opt for low-acid fruits like rockmelon or honeydew. If tolerated, this may be the best time to trial a small amount of acidic fruit such as berries.
- **Snacks:** Choose light, low-acid options such as carrot sticks with hummus, rice cakes with almond butter (in moderation), or a small bowl of melon slices.

3. Time Your Meals Wisely

This is especially important for **evening load reflux**, where meal timing and portion size play a key role.

- **Finish dinner at least 3 hours before bedtime** to allow for proper digestion.
- Avoid lying down or reclining immediately after meals.
- If you need a snack in the evening, choose something light and low-acid, such as a small handful of cashews or a spoonful of chia seed pudding.

Start with one or two strategies that match your reflux pattern, then build from there

Breathing to Support Digestion

In addition to choosing low-acid foods, diaphragmatic breathing (also known as deep abdominal breathing) is a simple yet effective tool to help manage reflux symptoms.

This technique stimulates the vagus nerve, which plays a key role in digestion. Activating the vagus nerve can help the lower oesophageal sphincter (LES) contract properly, preventing acid from rising into the oesophagus. It also supports relaxation, which is important since stress can make reflux worse.

How to Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing:

- 1. Find a comfortable position:** Sit or lie down in a quiet place.
- 2. Place one hand on your belly, and one on your chest:** This helps you feel the movement of your breath.
- 3. Inhale slowly through your nose:** Focus on expanding your belly - your lower hand should rise whilst your chest remains still.
- 4. Exhale gently through your mouth:** Let the air flow out slowly as your abdomen falls.
- 5. Repeat for 5-10 minutes:** Doing this once or twice a day for best results.

Why It Works:

Diaphragmatic breathing stimulates the **vagus nerve which** helps regulate digestion and signals the LES to contract more effectively. It also reduces stress - a known trigger for reflux - helping to break the cycle of symptom flare-ups.

REFLUX-FRIENDLY MEAL PLAN

To make your journey easier, we've created a **3-day reflux friendly meal plan** designed to help you apply the food lists and eating strategies in practice.

This meal plan is a general starting point using mostly Blue List foods, with small amounts of Orange List foods for variety.

You may need to adjust the meals depending on your reflux pattern. For example:

- If you experience bloating or pressure, reduce legumes, onions, and gas-producing foods
- If you have slow digestion, reduce higher-fat foods
- If you have sensitive reflux, keep meals simpler and focus more on Blue List foods

How to Use the Meal Plan:

1. **Follow the Structure:** Each day includes three small meals and two snacks to support digestion and avoid large or heavy meals.
2. **Adjust as Needed:** If a food doesn't suit you, swap it with a similar option from the Blue List.
3. **Time Your Meals:** Eat at regular intervals and aim to finish dinner 3 hours before bed.

Start with this plan consistently for 1-2 weeks, then adjust based on your symptoms and tolerance.

This plan is a guide - your long-term approach should be tailored to your reflux pattern.

MOVING FORWARD

By using the food lists, avoiding common triggers and adopting reflux-friendly habits, you can:

- Feel more settled and comfortable after meals
- Sleep more peacefully
- Support your body's recovery and reduce symptom flare-ups

A reflux friendly approach can improve day to day comfort and, over time, help to reduce the risk of longer-term complications such as Barrett's oesophagus and oesophageal strictures.

When to Seek Further Help

This guide does not claim to cure reflux. While a reflux-friendly diet can significantly reduce symptoms and improve comfort, it may not resolve reflux - especially if an underlying condition is present.

If your symptoms persist or worsen, it's important to seek medical advice. A medical professional can assess and diagnose contributing factors which may include:

- Food allergies or intolerances
- Eosinophilic esophagitis
- Gastritis or stomach infection
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- Weight gain or abdominal pressure

If you have a diagnosed condition that is contributing to reflux, a dietitian or naturopath can offer personalised dietary and lifestyle support to complement your medical treatment.

Take the Next Step

If you're ready for a more personalised approach to managing reflux, I invite you to book an **initial consultation** or schedule a **discovery call** to discuss your options.

Together, we'll develop a tailored plan to support your digestion, reduce discomfort, and promote long-term relief - working alongside your medical treatment to address the root causes of reflux.

Congratulations, you have now read The Reflux Relief Guide

You now have the tools to get started on choosing the right foods to reduce symptoms and help you eat with more comfort!

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