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## Managing Heartburn and Incontinence

Many of us struggle with day to day symptoms of discomfort. Both heartburn and incontinence can impact our lifestyle and our health.

### Heartburn

Heartburn, although common, is not a condition to ignore. In addition to the very real pain, the prolonged action of the stomach acids on the esophagus can lead to serious damage and even cancer. Avoid anything that places pressure on the stomach (large meals, exercising after eating and excess weight). Don't eat foods which trigger problems, don't lie down within 2-3 hours of eating and consider raising the head of your bed.

If making lifestyle changes to manage heartburn don't do the trick, it may be time to consider medication. Antacids will temporarily neutralize stomach acid if occasional symptoms occur but medications such as ranitidine or famotidine help to reduce the production of acid. If these are insufficient, talk to your doctor about proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) which can result in significantly better acid reduction.

### Incontinence

It's rarely talked about, but fecal incontinence (involuntarily passing gas or stool) can lead to significant lifestyle restrictions. Management includes dietary measures, exercises and even surgery. Adequate fibre intake, balanced with fluids, can manage both diarrhea and constipation. Avoid deli meats, spicy or greasy foods, dairy, alcohol, caffeine and sweeteners. And learn pelvic floor exercises to improve sphincter muscle tone.

Urinary incontinence is a condition sufferers are often reluctant to talk about, but there are some tips for reducing the problem. Minimize bladder irritants such as caffeine, alcohol, carbonated drinks, aspartame, spicy foods and citrus fruits/juices. Don't smoke and do maintain a healthy weight. Manage constipation to avoid straining and use pelvic floor exercises to improve control. Above all – stay active!

Incontinence may be unavoidable for some, but don't be shy about asking your pharmacist for advice and assistance. There are a number of products and medications that may be helpful.

You don't need to struggle through these conditions on a daily basis. Ask a pharmacist for help so you can live both a happy and healthy life.