

The Mortar & Pestle

Volume 3 Issue 12

Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare

HOLIDAY HEARTBURN

It's time for the holidays and that means large festive dinners and sweet treats. For many people, enjoying these large meals results in pesky heartburn symptoms.

What is heartburn?

Heartburn is an uncomfortable burning/warm sensation felt in your chest and may spread to the throat, jaw, arms or back. This sensation occurs when stomach acid is allowed to rise up from the stomach, past the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) and into the esophagus where the acid irritates and burns. Heartburn typically occurs 30-60 minutes after meals. Heartburn is often mistaken for chest pain due to a heart attack. If a person is ever having chest pain, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

What causes heartburn?

The following may prevent the LES from closing properly and result in heartburn symptoms:

- Certain foods and drinks (chocolate, peppermint, caffeine, onions, tomatoes, citrus fruits, spicy foods, fatty foods and alcohol)
- Prescription medications
- Medical Conditions (hiatal hernia, diabetes, gastroparesis and many autoimmune diseases)
- Increased abdominal pressure (lying down, coughing, tight clothing, obesity, pregnancy)

When to see your doctor?

Occasional heartburn is more of a nuisance than a real health problem, especially around the holidays. For others, heartburn is chronic and may be symptoms of a more serious health problem. If chronic acid reflux is left untreated it can lead to serious complications.

You should see your doctor if your heartburn:

- Occurs two or more times per week
- Wakes you up at night
- Isn't relieved by Over-the-Counter medications, or when you have to use these medications for longer than 2 weeks
- You have a persistent hoarseness or sore throat
- You have episodes of choking, coughing, or wheezing

How can you treat heartburn?

There are many over-the-counter remedies that work quickly and effectively for the treatment of occasional heartburn. These include: Tums, Rolaids, Gaviscon, Pepcid and Zantac. Our pharmacists can help you choose which will work best for you. The easiest way to treat mild heartburn is to prevent it, by avoiding trigger foods. When that's not possible, a large glass of milk can help relieve symptoms.

If you would like help selecting a heartburn remedy, or would like to know more about heartburn and related conditions speak with one of our pharmacists today.

STAY HEALTHY, WASH YOUR HANDS

Holiday parties can expose you to a slew of new bugs which can result in an un-festive flu or a seasonal cold. Washing your hands correctly or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer is the most effective way to protect yourself and others from the common cold and flu.

To wash your hands correctly, follow these steps:

- Wash your hands frequently
- Use soap and water, and rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds (about the amount of time it takes to sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)
- Be sure to wash the front and back of your hands as well as between your fingers and under your nails
- Rinse your hands under warm running water using a rubbing motion
- Wipe your hands dry with paper towel or a clean towel
- Turn off the tap using the towels so you do not re-contaminate your hands. When using a public bathroom use the same towel to open the door when you leave.

Alcohol-based hand rubs can be used if soap and water are not available. These rubs only work if hands are not visibly soiled. Use on dry hands and use enough product to cover the skin of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until the product has evaporated.

To further protect yourself and your family from becoming sick follow the following tips:

- Cough/Sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow
- Clean frequently touched surfaces in your home clean (doorknobs, phones, keyboards etc.)
- Don't use a common hand towel
- Change sponges and dishcloths/towels daily

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine each season. Stafford Pharmacy is offering flu vaccinations on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00pm – 4:30 PM. No appointment necessary.**

Anyone aged 10 and older **presenting a valid Alberta Health Care card is eligible to receive a FREE flu vaccination** by one of our trained pharmacists or nurses. Children aged <10 must get their vaccination from the Lethbridge Community Health Center, their family physician or attend one of the flu clinics at the Exhibition Park.

STAFFORD PHARMACY HOLIDAY HOURS

Monday December 24th – 9:00am-4:00pm
Tuesday December 25th – **CLOSED**
Wednesday December 26th – **CLOSED**
Thursday December 27th – 9:00am-6:00pm
Friday December 28th – 9:00 am-6:00pm
Saturday December 29th – 10:00am-6:00pm

Monday December 31st – 9:00am-4:00pm
Tuesday January 1st – **CLOSED**
Wednesday January 2nd – 9:00am-6:00pm
Thursday January 3rd – 9:00am-6:00pm
Friday January 4th – 9:00 am-6:00pm
Saturday January 5th – 10:00am-6:00pm

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