

## HEALTH NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL CENTER

**To prevent or treat occasional heartburn**

- ✓ **Avoid triggers.** Foods with caffeine or fat and cigarette smoking. "Acidic foods and alcohol can hurt going down, but don't really cause reflux disease," says Dr. Carr-Locke.
- ✓ **Eat smaller meals and avoid lying down** right after a meal.
- ✓ **Avoid exercise right after a meal.**
- ✓ **Lose weight.** Increased weight on the abdomen puts pressure on the physical system.
- ✓ **Turn to over-the-counter medications for relief.** Ask your doctor or pharmacist for guidance.



David L. Carr-Locke, MD, showing some heartburn irritants.

# Help Your Heartburn

## WHAT IT IS, HOW TO AVOID IT AND WHEN TO CALL A DOCTOR

Everyone suffers from heartburn once in a while, that uncomfortable feeling you might get after a too-rich meal. Heartburn is the burning sensation that results when irritating stomach acid leaks back up into the esophagus. The esophagus is a hollow pipe through which food travels from your mouth down to your stomach. The stomach is very acidic so the food, once it's there, can be broken down. "The entire digestive system is designed to keep the food and the acid in the stomach. But sometimes it backfires," says **David L. Carr-Locke, MD, FRCP, FASGE**, Chief of the Division of Digestive Diseases at Beth Israel. If the sphincter, a round muscle that closes the esophagus, relaxes at the wrong time or for a longer period than it should, acid and other gastric contents come up into the esophagus. "Since the esophagus is lined with tissue similar to skin, it hurts when it's exposed to acids," explains Dr. Carr-Locke.

Sometimes chronic heartburn can be symptomatic of a more serious digestive condition or even of heart disease. "If your heartburn becomes persistent, lasts a long time on one day, or is present with another symptom like difficulty swallowing, call your doctor," advises Dr. Carr-Locke.

Treatment of chronic heartburn (gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD) may include a closely followed regimen of over-the-counter medications or prescription medications, as well as behavior modifications, such as dietary changes. Your doctor may also advise endoscopy (examination of the esophagus and stomach with a flexible instrument passed through the mouth) to ensure that there are no other conditions, such as ulcers, narrowing of the esophagus, changes in the lining or, rarely, cancer. Surgical interventions might be considered to correct anatomical problems, such as a hiatal hernia or weak sphincter, which could be causing the recurring heartburn. And if heartburn is a symptom of another condition, appropriate evaluations, interventions and referrals can be made. ●



**For a comprehensive range of evaluations and treatments of digestive disorders,** call the Center for Digestive Health at (212) 604-6822 or Dr. Carr-Locke's office at (212) 420-4029. Listen to our experts discuss heartburn at [www.ORlive.com/NYDigestiveHealth](http://www.ORlive.com/NYDigestiveHealth).



## Message from the President

Spring is the time for reassessment. In this *Healthy Neighbors*, Beth Israel's practitioners teach you to do just that—how to manage your heartburn, travel safely, update your workout and learn meditation.

The theme of this newsletter is taking control of your health. Every clinician knows that the patient is the most important member of the health care team. The better you understand your health needs, the healthier your life will be.

That's where Beth Israel comes in. We want to partner with you and your family to better your quality of life. We also want to be here when you need expertise beyond self care.

This edition of our newsletter includes a peek at our brand-new emergency department renovations. This improvement signifies the ultimate in our promise: Every day, we are here to help by providing quality of care and improved access to care. We hope you don't need many of our services and, in fact, we work hard to help you avoid preventable disease, accidents and serious health issues. But whether by offering you well care, routine care, chronic care, complicated care, cutting-edge care or emergency care, Beth Israel is committed to assisting everyone who turns to us.

**Harris M. Nagler, MD, FACS**  
President, Beth Israel Medical Center

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# Learn to Meditate

"Meditation is wonderful for your health, spirit and emotions. It works on every level," says **Martin H. Ehrlich MD, MPH**, Medical Director of the Continuum Center for Health and Healing. "Studies have suggested that mindful stress reduction can help people cope better with chronic physical problems such as high blood pressure, depression, irritable bowel syndrome and pain. It's powerful medicine."

Best of all, meditation is something you can teach yourself to do. Dr. Ehrlich recommends you get started by picking a calm, uncluttered spot in your home and turn off the television and phone. Also pick a time. Meditation can become a good habit if it happens the same time every day. "Morning is often preferred, before body and mind become tired from the day's activity, but some people like to do it in the afternoon or evening," says Dr. Ehrlich.



It's best not to be too full or too hungry. Wear something loose, but warm. Traditionally, those who meditate sit on padded blankets or a cushion to lift their hips about six inches above their crossed legs. "That alignment allows energy to flow throughout your body, but you can sit on a chair or even lie down," says Dr. Ehrlich. "Just keep your back comfortably straight so you can breathe easily."

The point of meditation is to quiet your mind. Most people find watching their breath helps to focus. Or you can try a mantra, any word or phrase you can repeat. Slowly and repeatedly, counting to 10 and then backwards to one can work, too.

The posture, the breathing, the mantra—all these are tools to silence the "chatter" in your mind. It can take a long time to achieve a peaceful, silent mind, so you must be patient. If you are having a hard time, don't become judgmental. "Just calmly return to your focus and let the thought wander out of your mind as easily as it wandered in," advises Dr. Ehrlich.

Meditation is a lifelong endeavor. Even if you're not "getting it right," your body and mind will still benefit from the practice. Meditate for five minutes and work yourself up slowly by five-minute increments to a duration that feels comfortable. ●

The Center for Health and Healing sponsors ongoing classes to help guide you through meditation and other stress-reducing and healing practices. Visit [www.HealthAndHealingNY.org/center/calendar.asp](http://www.HealthAndHealingNY.org/center/calendar.asp)



# Tune Up Your Workout

“Everyone’s workout can benefit from variation,” says **Robert S. Gotlin, DO**, Director of Orthopedic and Sports Rehabilitation, shown below at his own workout. “It’s important to mix up what you’re doing for many reasons. Your body gets too used to the same thing and different muscles need different challenges.”

You also want to avoid boredom. “If you have had the same exercise patterns for too long, chances are you’ll start to skip your workouts because you’re just plain bored,” explains Dr. Gotlin.



## Dr. Gotlin shares his thoughts on how to give your fitness program a spring cleaning:

- **Change up what you do.** If you are a runner, work some upper body weight training into your routine. If you play softball with friends on the weekends, add some yoga classes to your week.
- **Take it outside.** It’s especially good to get outside after a long winter. Break out of the gym and go for a brisk walk or do stretches in the park.
- **Find a friend.** “You can go competitive and create contests, or go collaborative and just make sure you’re both showing up. Pets count as friends too. My dog always runs with me and he always wins.”
- **Consider your age.** “As we age, muscles tend to become less elastic. We can and should still use them, but you may need to start your workouts more gently or consider alternatives to high-impact activities.”
- **Check with your physician** before starting an exercise program, especially if you are on medication or have a medical condition.

 For more information on exercise or rehabilitation, call (646) 935-2255.

## Take a Peek: Emergency Department Renovation

Beth Israel has finished its emergency department (ED) improvement! The ED is brand-new and is more than twice as big as it used to be. Every patient treatment space has been renovated. There is a separate pediatric ED within the larger ED, which has TVs, DVDs, and kid-friendly art. The ED also has three distinct adult treatment areas, each of which has a dedicated team of nurses and other providers. The new ED also has state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, including a 64-slice CT scanner.



# Travel in Good Health

Spring and summer are great times for trips. Make sure you stay healthy on yours. **Sharon Goldberg, MD, DTM&H**, an attending physician at Beth Israel and a travel medicine practitioner, suggests that you:

- Make sure routine vaccines are up to date.
- Pack enough medication in carry-on luggage for the whole trip plus some extra doses for possible delays.
- Make sure prescribed drugs are well marked with your full name and prescription information.
- Carry your physician's name and contact information and show someone else in the travel party where to find it.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration, especially on flights.
- Exercise as much as possible. If flying, stretch legs often to avoid blood clots.
- Review travel plans with your doctor if you have a medical condition.
- Always heed local advice. "If the locals say don't swim, don't swim," says Dr. Goldberg.



## IF YOU ARE TRAVELING ABROAD, ESPECIALLY TO THE DEVELOPING WORLD, DR. GOLDBERG RECOMMENDS THAT WOULD-BE ADVENTURERS:

1. Check with the Centers for Disease Control at [www.CDC.gov/travel](http://www.CDC.gov/travel) for a list of vaccines or anti-malarials to protect against local diseases. Review the list with a travel physician several weeks before your departure.
2. Drink bottled water bought from reliable sources or boiled water. Avoid ice cubes and use bottled water when brushing teeth.
3. Consider evacuation insurance in case you get sick or are in an accident and can't depend on local medical care.
4. Follow this advice for food: Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it.
5. Pack Pepto Bismol in case of diarrhea.
6. In areas with malaria, pack a 20% DEET insecticide and a permethrin-impregnated bed net. If your accommodations provide netting, bring a spray can of permethrin to spray the netting before you sleep.

Stay healthy this season with our travel and exercise advice, as well as learn how to prevent heartburn and how to meditate!



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