



Ent Associates of Northern Colorado

Laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR)

What is LPR (Laryngopharyngeal reflux)?

During eating, food travels down a muscular tube (esophagus) into the stomach where it is digested by enzymes and gastric acid. The esophagus has 2 valves (sphincters). One is at the entrance of the feeding tube and the other is located at the feeding tube stomach junction. The term “reflux” refers to the stomach contents (refluxate) that enter the feeding tube in a backwards course through the lower sphincter. Laryngopharyngeal reflux occurs when the stomach refluxate travels up the feeding tube, through the upper sphincter and enters the throat area.

What is the difference between GERD & LPR?

People that have an abnormal amount of stomach acid refluxate passing through the lower sphincter up into the feeding tube have a condition known as gastroesophageal (GERD) reflux. If the refluxate travels up the feeding tube through the upper esophageal sphincter into the back of the throat, the condition is known as laryngopharyngeal (LPR) reflux.

Why don't I have heartburn or stomach problems?

A small amount of refluxate in the feeding tube will not cause heartburn or stomach upset and occurs normally. If this small amount of refluxate travels through the upper sphincter into the throat, this will result in the symptoms of LPR. The structures in the throat are sensitive to gastric acid and therefore smaller amounts of the refluxate will result in damage to this area. Most patients with LPR do not have heartburn or stomach symptoms that are commonly associated with GERD.

What are the common symptoms of LPR?

- Hoarseness
- Sensation of “something” in the throat
- Frequent throat clearing
- Chronic cough
- Chronic sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Asthma- like symptoms
- Post nasal drainage
- Symptoms of GERD

Qualified medical personnel trained at identifying, diagnosing and treating LPR should evaluate these symptoms.