Avoid tight clothing around your waist: Bending from the knees when lifting and moving may also help.

Some people find it helpful to keep a food diary to identify any particular foods or eating habits which make their symptoms worse.

Are there any medicines I can take to help?

Your consultant or GP may have prescribed a medicine known as a PPI or Proton Pump Inhibitor. Examples include Lanzoprazole and Omeprazole. These prevent the secretion of acid into the stomach. For the most effective treatment of LPR these should be taken half an hour before meals. For the medication to be effective, you should take it for a continuous period of time once or twice a day, as prescribed. If symptoms do not improve go to your GP to review the type and amount of medication. It may take a couple of attempts to find the combination that works best for you.

Proton pump inhibitors (PPI) do not stop the production of Pepsin, the key factor in LPR (silent reflux). As well as taking a PPI, taking an alginate such as Gaviscon Advance will protect the throat from the enzyme Pepsin. It works in two ways, firstly it forms a coating on the top of the stomach to reduce the number of reflux episodes and it reduces pepsin activity. When the alginate comes into contact with pepsin it deactivates the enzyme and protects the lining of your throat.

It is best to take Gaviscon Advance as the very last thing you take before going to bed. It can also be of benefit after meals and before strenuous exercise. You should not take it at the same time as taking your PPI or other anti-acid medication, as it can make them less effective.

For advice on any medications you have been prescribed or purchased over the counter speak to your GP or pharmacist.

To see all of our current patient information leaflets please visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm
What is reflux?
Reflux is the back flow of gastric juice and enzymes from the stomach into the oesophagus (food pipe) and/or throat. There are two main types of reflux. Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD), which is most commonly associated with heartburn and indigestion symptoms; and extra-oesophageal reflux, of which laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR) is the type that affects the throat and voice.

LPR is when stomach acid may flow all the way back up to your throat, commonly affecting the voice. It is often known as ‘silent reflux’, as many people do not experience heartburn symptoms with this form of reflux. Symptoms may include:
- a sore throat,
- excess mucus in the throat,
- the feeling of a lump or tightness in the throat,
- regular coughing or clearing the throat,
- dryness in the mouth and throat,
- and hoarseness of voice.

Symptoms may be worse at night and early in the morning.

How does reflux affect the throat?
The lining of the stomach is designed to cope with acid but the throat is not. In LPR we now know that it is the digestive enzyme Pepsin which when combined with acid from the stomach or from certain foods and drink can damage the lining of the throat.

What can I do to help?
1. Avoid eating late at night:
Reflux is aggravated by bending, lying flat, lifting or straining. Eating before bedtime will therefore encourage gastric back-flow. Try to allow at least three hours between your last meal and lying down.

2. Eat small frequent meals during the day:
This will distribute the physical load on the stomach and minimise the risk of reflux. Sipping water between meals may help, rather than drinking and eating together. Sit and relax for a while after eating. Avoid drinking large amounts of water all at once.

3. Avoid eating foods which can make reflux worse:
This includes high-fat foods, chocolate, prepared cakes and desserts, spicy foods, citrus fruits and mint. Acidic foods should be avoided, for example tomatoes and any tomato based sauces. Food that is very hot or cold in temperature may over stimulate the gastric musculature and increase risk of reflux also. Chewing gum can also aggravate reflux.

4. Avoid fizzy drinks, caffeinated drinks, or highly acidic drinks:
This includes tea, coffee and fruit juices.

5. Avoid alcohol:
You should avoid all alcohol but particularly white wine and spirits.

6. Stop smoking:
Smoking can increase the risk of developing reflux and aggravate your symptoms.

7. Try raising the head of the bed:
Using blocks or wedges under the head of your bed to raise it by about six inches will alter the angle you sleep at. Using extra pillows alone may cause your stomach to become squashed and may increase the risk of reflux. Also, try sleeping on your left side to reduce reflux.

8. Try to lose weight if you are overweight:
The pressure of excess weight around the stomach encourages a back-flow of gastric contents into the oesophagus. Taking regular exercise can help.