

Feel the Burn: GERD Symptoms in College Population

*Krista Buchanan, Rachel Egbert, Katlin Fleischut,
Kathleen Fogle, Michelle Griffin, Carolyn Novaleski,
Marian Shoulin, Pamela A. Smith, Ph.D., CCC-SLP*

*Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, PA*

What is GERD?

- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a condition of frequent backflow of stomach contents into the esophagus.¹
- Laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR) differs from GERD in that stomach contents reenter the throat.¹

GERD Related to Voice Disorders

- Both GERD and LPR may contribute to development of laryngeal and voice disorders.
- GERD has been found in 80% of patients with dysphonia.³
- As many as 50% of patients with voice disorders may have LPR.² LPR was found to cause significant voice problems in patients similar to those caused by vocal fold polyps.⁴

Research Questions

1. Are symptoms of GERD and LPR prevalent among college students?
2. Are college students knowledgeable about GERD?
3. How frequently do college students consume foods or beverages that are believed to trigger episodes of reflux?
4. Are there demographic differences in eating habits?

Methods

- 273 Bloomsburg University undergraduate students (68 males, 205 females) completed a 35-item survey.
- 9-item Reflux Symptom Index ranging from (0 = no problem to 5 = severe problem) was used to measure symptoms of LPR.²
- A 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) was used.

Conclusions

- Few participants indicated experiencing problems on Reflux Symptom Index, suggesting that symptoms of GERD are uncommon among college students.
- Small percentage (5.5%) of participants reported being diagnosed with GERD.

Conclusions

- Participants who reported diagnosis of GERD were more likely to report problems with their voice, suggesting that they may be at higher risk of developing voice disorders. These participants may require more assistance with managing their reported symptoms.
- Participants who reported diagnosis were more likely to agree with experiencing throat/chest pain after eating and waking up in night with throat/chest discomfort.

Conclusions

- Only 5% of participants correctly named what GERD stands for and less than 1/3 of participants indicated that they knew what the Little Purple Pill is. These results suggest that college students lack knowledge about GERD.
- Participants reported moderate consumption of foods and beverages believed to trigger GERD.
- Differences in eating behaviors were found between male and female participants. Females were more likely to report feeling full after eating quickly and males were less likely to agree that they are slow eaters.

Conclusions

- Results indicate that GERD symptoms are not prevalent in college population.
- A small percentage of participants who reported having GERD may be more at risk of developing voice disorders.
- Findings suggest that college students lack awareness about GERD and may benefit from further education.

Future Directions

- Obtain larger group of participants diagnosed with GERD to make comparisons with those who are undiagnosed.
- Survey college students' awareness about vocal health.
- Educate college students about GERD and potential effects on voice quality.

Online Link to Poster

- ▶ To view the poster online, please visit:
- ▶ <http://organizations.bloomu.edu/nsslha/imagel/Acid%20Reflux%20Poster%2036x48.pdf>

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