Tailgating for the Eagles game? Use these tips to avoid heart burn horrors

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by Sonaly Patel, MD, For The Inquirer

This Sunday’s Eagles game against the Minnesota Vikings seems like the perfect opportunity to overindulge in our favorite junk foods. But for those with digestive issues, heart burn and indigestion can be a game-day spoiler. To avoid any gastrointestinal (GI) setbacks during your tailgating experience, follow these tips.
Avoid foods that increase stomach acid secretion, as well as foods that affect the integrity of the valve between your esophagus and stomach, which can cause heartburn. Classic triggers of heartburn are spicy foods, tomato-based products, greasy or fried foods, dairy, coffee and chocolate.

While many of these foods are game day staples, you can avoid heart burn and indigestion by making a few simple changes to your favorite football snacks. For example:

- Bake your chicken wings ahead of the game instead of the frying them.
- Swap a spicy dipping sauce for a sweet barbecue sauce instead.
- Ditch the mac and cheese for a three-bean salad to increase fiber intake and keep things moving along the GI tract.
- Pick up a fresh vegetable platter, instead of the usual bag of potato chips, when you’re out shopping for the game.

Making smart choices when it comes to alcohol is important, as well. Wine and hard liquor can irritate the lining of your stomach and may worsen acid reflux. Beer is a better option to avoid heart burn; however, keep in mind, beer is carbonated and can cause bloating and gassiness.

Remember to keep some over-the-counter indigestion and heart burn remedies on hand if you plan to indulge in foods responsible for acid reflux. Ranitidine (Zantac) is a quick-acting medication that provides heart burn relief for four to six hours. Tums or Maalox can also help by neutralizing stomach acid and relieving indigestion and heart burn.

If you have persistent symptoms days after the big game, despite using over-the-counter medications, contact your physician to explore additional treatment.

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