

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Getting Around GERD: One Athlete's Acid Test

(NAPSA)—Many sports fans don't know a surprising fact about one of the greatest Olympians of all time, swimmer Mark Spitz. While he continued to break World records in his early 20's, his body wasn't as invincible as he thought.

Spitz had always led a healthy lifestyle filled with plenty of exercise and a sensible diet. It came as a shock when he began to experience symptoms of acid reflux disease as an Olympic athlete in his early 20's.

"During my Olympic training, I attributed the symptoms to an overexposure to chlorine and eating too soon before and after swimming," says Spitz. "It wasn't until the symptoms began to get in the way of my broadcasting career in Montreal, which was four years after retirement, that I suspected something more serious must be happening."

After retirement, Spitz was officially diagnosed with acid reflux disease, a condition his physician thinks he suffered from throughout his career. The most common symptoms of acid reflux disease include persistent heartburn on two or more days a week, a sour or bitter taste in the mouth and difficulty swallowing.

"The most alarming thing I learned was that stomach acid was regularly backing up into my



Record gold-metal winning Olympic swimmer Mark Spitz had a health problem.

esophagus and causing an uncomfortable burning sensation," says Spitz. "My doctor explained that if I had continued to ignore the symptoms, the acid could erode or cause physical damage to the lining of the esophagus, which is a potentially serious condition I hadn't known about called erosive esophagitis."

About one-third of people that experience frequent, persistent symptoms of acid reflux disease also have erosive esophagitis, which is another reason it's important to treat this chronic condition appropriately. Spitz's symptoms subsided after talking to his doctor and taking a proton pump inhibitor called NEXIUM® (esomeprazole magnesium).

NEXIUM is recommended for treating frequent, persistent heartburn and other symptoms associated with acid reflux disease. The drug is also approved

for healing erosive esophagitis. Studies show that up to 94 percent of patients were healed with NEXIUM. Most erosions heal in four to eight weeks. Individual results may vary, and only a doctor can determine if erosions to the esophagus have occurred. The most common side effects of NEXIUM are headache, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Symptom relief does not rule out the existence of other serious stomach conditions.

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