and greatly increase your risk of esophageal cancer, according to Charlene Prather, M.D., associate professor at Saint Louis University. Don’t delay seeking help, as GERDS is usually highly treatable.

To see the doctor, or not to see the doctor…as, you can see, there are times when playing “The Hero” means getting timely medical advice, and not ignoring symptoms until it’s too late.

What to Do about Food Intolerance
Most Americans who believe they have food allergies actually suffer from food intolerance. Food intolerance occurs when your body cannot adequately digest a portion of the food eaten. While it can be uncomfortable, it’s not life threatening. Try these strategies:

• If you suspect you are intolerant to a particular food, eat the food 2-3 times in a row. Keep a food journal of what you eat and what reaction, if any, you have.
• If it’s a small problem, eat the food in smaller amounts or less frequently.
• If it’s a larger problem, try the food in a different form. For example, many lactase-intolerant people can eat yogurt.
• It is almost impossible to be allergic to an entire food group. If you find you’re sensitive to walnuts, try almonds and Brazil nuts. If you have bloating and gas from eating red beans, try white beans.

Symptoms Not To Ignore
By: Roby Angelina Sherman, M.D. (Internal Medicine) and Sherri Neuroh, B.Sc. Agric. (Hons.)

Have you ever wondered where the balance is between denial and hypochondria? To see the doctor, or not to see the doctor, that is the question…

This article will attempt to highlight some symptoms we often live with and endure for many months, when we really should get them checked out. Please note, this is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does it deal with obvious medical emergencies.

Changes in your lymph nodes
Lymph nodes are part of our immune system, and are strategically clustered in the neck area, under the armpits, in the groin, etc. Any progressive development (for more than a month) of a lump or swelling in these nodes warrants a trip to the doctor, especially if the lump is hard, irregular in shape and/or is not freely movable, according to Dr. Hannah Linden, University of Washington.

Unexplained changes in bowel habits
If a shift in your usual routine is not due to insufficient fiber, exercise and/or water, it could have a bacterial, viral or parasitic cause. It could even be something more sinister such colon cancer. Also, should you see bright
Sadness, depression, loss of interest in life

Depression is not to be endured, because it can be life threatening. You may not even suspect you are depressed, but your family and friends may be concerned about changes in your behavior and attitudes. Multiple factors contribute to depression; some are easily treatable, e.g. vitamin inadequacies, while others are more complex and require professional help. Dr. Neil Nedley offers a “Depression Recovery Program” that works.

Moles

The arrival of new moles, or sudden changes in your existing moles, warrants a trip to the doctor. Especially if the mole in question, is getting larger, darker, raised up and more asymmetrical. Changes in skin pigmentation, excessive scaling or sudden bleeding, need to be evaluated, says Dr. Mary Daly, an oncologist in Philadelphia. Skin cancers are easily removed while small, and there is no need to suffer the ravages of a metastasizing skin cancer. P.S. Your doctor can measure and/or photograph your moles for future comparison.

Difficulty breathing

If you are progressively short of breath during exercise, activities of daily living and especially when inactive, (e.g. lying on your bed), get an evaluation. Changes in your breathing could indicate heart or lung problems, allergies or even developing asthma. Untreated asthma can result in damaged lung tissues and ultimately heart strain, according to Dr. Rachel Koelsch, specialist at The Cleveland Clinic.

Tenderness and pain

in the back of your lower leg

If you are traveling, spending long hours sitting down, or bedridden, a progressive tenderness and pain in your lower legs could signal a potentially dangerous blood clot. If your calf feels swollen, painful and tender to the touch, and there is no obvious injury, it’s best to have it checked out.

Weakness or numbness in any body part, difficulty speaking, sudden changes in vision, confusion, or loss of balance that resolves spontaneously.

These symptoms describe a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA), or “mini-stroke”. When such symptoms resolve spontaneously, the temptation is to “sleep it off” and forget about it. The reality is that often, TIA’s are warning signs of an impending stroke, and should be taken seriously. Make an appointment to see your doctor. A handy mnemonic is FAST: Facial paralysis, Arm weakness, Speech difficulties, Time to act!

Indigestion, bloating, feeling full after eating a small amount

Persistent daily bloating for more than a few weeks, feeling stuffy after having hardly eaten anything, or indigestion for no apparent reason should have you looking up your doctor’s phone number. It could indicate anything from parasites to cancer, and needs checking out. Many women tend to unwisely “grim-and-bear” these symptoms because they deal with bloating on a monthly basis. Ladies, don’t forget your annual female wellness exams.

Two or more episodes of heartburn each week

Are you one of those who can’t make it through a day (or week) without your trusty antacids? Regular episodes of heartburn could mean that you have Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), which could lead to asthma attacks, pneumonia.