

GERD Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

What is GERD? GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease) is a common condition involving the esophagus (the muscular tube that connects the back of the mouth to the stomach) that can occur at any age, but typically begins to appear around age 40. Many people refer to this disorder as heartburn or indigestion. GERD is caused when the muscular valve at the lower end of the esophagus relaxes, allowing the contents of the stomach to backwash, or reflux, into the esophagus. These gastric contents contain strong acids and bile that are very irritating to the lining of the esophagus.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is pain located anywhere from the upper abdomen to the upper chest/neck. The pain is usually described as burning, but may be sharp or more like pressure. Severe chest pain that mimics a heart attack may occur. Other symptoms include difficulty in swallowing (known as dysphagia), nausea, and regurgitation. GERD can also manifest itself with symptoms of the upper respiratory tract, such as frequent sore throats.

What causes GERD?

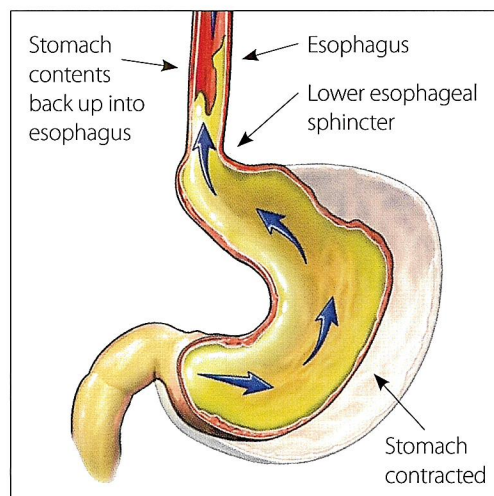
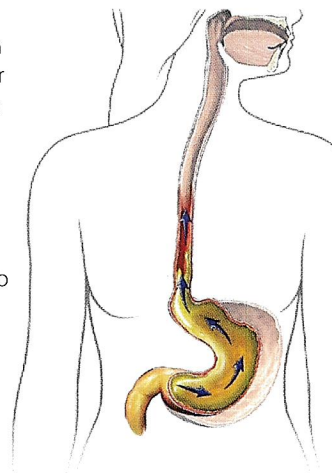
As mentioned above, GERD occurs when the normal valve (or sphincter) between the stomach and the esophagus is weakened or whenever there are factors that will promote regurgitation of gastric contents into the esophagus. Patients with hiatal hernias (where the stomach is free to slide into the chest temporarily), those who produce excessive acid, and those who have delayed emptying of the stomach after meals are therefore more likely to experience GERD. Triggers include obesity and excessive consumption of fatty foods, chocolate, peppermints, greasy or spicy foods, tomato products, citrus products, caffeine, and alcohol. Smoking, tight clothing, and eating heavy meals before sleeping can also contribute to the condition.

Are there any serious conditions that GERD can cause?

One of the most common problems with GERD is the esophagitis resulting from the caustic irritation of the distal part of the esophagus. Acid splashing back into the esophagus can result in inflammation or even a narrowing scar (stricture) that causes people to have difficulty swallowing. Other complications include ulceration of the lining of the esophagus, asthma, pneumonia, and ear infection.

FIGURE 1

GERD occurs when the normal valve (or sphincter) between the stomach and the esophagus is weakened and promotes the regurgitation of gastric contents into the esophagus.



Patients with chronic, untreated heartburn can also develop Barrett's esophagus, a condition that requires monitoring to avoid developing esophageal cancer.

How is GERD diagnosed?

Your physician will take a complete medical history and conduct a physical exam. Usually the physician makes a diagnosis based upon your symptoms. An endoscopy allows your physician to see the damage caused by reflux, such as redness, erosion, or ulcerations in the bottom part of the esophagus. Esophageal manometry uses a flexible tube that is inserted into your nose down to your stomach and is designed to measure the strength of the lower esophageal sphincter. Another test is the pH monitor that records how much acid washes back into your esophagus.

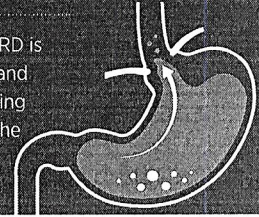
CONTINUED ON REVERSE



About **ACID REFLUX & GERD**

Information from the American College of Gastroenterology

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD) is one of the most common gastrointestinal diseases. GERD is caused by the flow of contents from the stomach upwards into the esophagus resulting in both symptoms and complications. The most common GERD symptoms are heartburn and regurgitation. **HEARTBURN** is a burning sensation in the chest behind the breastbone. **REGURGITATION** is a feeling of fluid or food coming up into the chest. Many people experience both symptoms; however, some patients can have one without the other.



UP TO 20% OF THE U.S. POPULATION MAY HAVE GERD



Heartburn is **COMMON** but **NOT TRIVIAL**

U.S. Economic Burden

\$15 TO 20 BILLION ANNUALLY

These may be GERD-related symptoms

- ✓ Asthma-like symptoms
- ✓ Bitter taste in mouth
- ✓ Chronic cough
- ✓ Dental erosions
- ✓ Hoarseness

GERD FACTS

- ✓ Symptoms are often experienced **after meals**
- ✓ Heartburn or symptoms happening **two or more times per week** can be troublesome
- ✓ Antacids can provide temporary symptom relief
- ✓ Over-the-counter or prescription medications may be needed
- ✓ Persistent symptoms may require further investigation such as endoscopy
- ✓ Surgery can be considered if you **cannot tolerate medications** or have persistent symptoms

GERD TIPS

2 TO 3 HOURS

Avoid meals within 2-3 hours of bedtime

LOSE WEIGHT

If you are **overweight** and can lose weight GERD symptoms can **improve**

STOP SMOKING

HEADS UP

Raise the head of your bed **6-8 inches**

LEFT SIDE

Sleep on your **left side** to ease nighttime heartburn

MORE TIPS:

- Wear loose fitting clothes
- Eliminate food triggers
- Take your medications as directed
- Ask your doctor which treatment option is right for you

If left **UNTREATED COMPLICATIONS** may include:

- Esophageal stricture
- Bleeding
- Barrett's esophagus
- Esophageal cancer

FOOD Triggers to AVOID

- Carbonated beverages
- Citrus drinks
- Fatty or spicy foods
- Tomato products
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Peppermint



Learn More: Scan QR code or visit: bit.ly/acg-gerd-info

Find a gastroenterologist near you: gi.org/FindaGI

READ The American College of Gastroenterology 2022 GERD Guidelines: bit.ly/ACG-GERD-Guidelines-2022

GERD

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

Bed Blocks

Elevate the head of your bed 2-6 inches with wood blocks or bricks. Using extra pillows is NOT a good substitute. Use of a foam wedge beneath the upper half of the body is an alternative.

Limit Coffee

Limit coffee to 2-3 cups per day. Limiting consumption of other caffeine-containing beverages (tea, soft drinks) may also be helpful.

Avoid Foods If They Cause Symptoms

Foods that may aggravate symptoms include: spicy and fatty foods, tomato and citrus juices (such as grapefruit and orange juices), chocolate, mints, coffee, tea, colas, and alcoholic beverages.

Avoid Tight Clothing

Tight belts, tight pants or girdles can increase the pressure on the abdomen.

Do Not Lie Down for 2 Hours After Eating

Allow gravity to work. Also, avoid bending over at the waist to pick up things; instead bend at the knees.

Antacids

Antacids can be taken at bedtime and 30-60 minutes after each meal or as directed by your physician.

Stop Smoking

If you cannot stop, decreasing the number of cigarettes you smoke may help.

Eat Smaller Meals

Don't overfill your stomach.

Lose Weight

Excess weight increases the amount of pressure constantly placed on your stomach. Even small amounts of weight loss may help.

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