

# Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

## What is GERD?

- Also known as acid reflux, chronic heartburn and acid indigestion
- A digestive disorder in which partially digested food from the stomach along with stomach acid backs into the esophagus
- Happens when the valve between the esophagus and stomach malfunctions; the valve stays open instead of closed.

## What causes it?

- Overeating
- Overweight
- Stress
- Alcoholic beverage consumption
- Consumption of spicy foods
- Eating too rapidly
- Eating chocolate and peppermint
- Drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, drugs that irritate the gastrointestinal lining, drugs used to treat asthma and blood pressure medications
- Consumption of fatty foods and fried foods; tomato-based foods and citrus, raw onions, garlic, black pepper and vinegar
- Smoking
- Lying down after eating
- Bending from the waist, heavy lifting, straining at stool and pregnancy
- Inadequate chewing
- Swallowing large amounts of air when eating
- Coffee, tea and other caffeine-containing beverages; carbonated beverages
- Tight-fitting clothing
- Dehydration

## What are the signs & symptoms?

- Regurgitation or a chronic sour taste in the mouth
- Angina like chest pain
- Dysphagia or difficulty swallowing
- Bronchial spasms with asthma
- Shortness of breath
- Belching, bloating and gas

- A sense of fullness after eating
- Abdominal distention after eating
- Sore throat/Laryngitis
- Nausea
- Vomiting of blood

## How to relieve GERD

- Quit Smoking. Smoking weakens the lower esophageal sphincter valve.
- Avoid foods that lower esophageal sphincter muscle: fried or fatty foods; regular or decaffeinated coffee; caffeinated tea and cola drinks; alcoholic beverages; chocolate; peppermint and spearmint; garlic; onions, all carbonated beverages (force acid back up into esophagus).
- Avoid the following foods if you have a damaged esophageal lining: citrus fruits and juices, tomato products, chili peppers, pepper, spicy foods.
- Eat small frequent meals. Avoid eating big meals and high-fat meals.
- Avoid eating or drinking at least 3-4 hours before lying down.
- Avoid exercising soon after eating.
- Eat slowly. Chew foods carefully.
- Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are comfortable.
- If you are overweight try to lose some of the extra weight.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Elevate the head off the bed six inches. Lie on your left side.
- Chew gum to boost saliva production, which soothes the esophagus and washes acid back down to the stomach.
- Eat ginger chews, crystallized ginger, ginger syrup or ginger tea.
- Take digestive enzymes to support digestion and relieve symptoms.
- Aloe vera juice aids in healing of the digestive tract. B vitamins aid in proper digestion.
- Catnip, fennel, ginger, marshmallow root, papaya are herbs that aid in proper digestion and can stop heartburn.
- Do not wear tight fitting clothing.
- Learn how to manage stress.



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