

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is caused by frequent backflow of food and acid into the esophagus (a tube connecting the mouth with stomach). This can occur in healthy people occasionally but is a frequent problem in those with GERD. Stomach contents are normally prevented from moving to the esophagus by the esophageal sphincter (a valve-like ring of muscle at the end of the esophagus). When this muscle relaxes and allows reflux or is generally weak, GERD may occur. GERD can affect people of any age or sex.

SYMPTOMS OF GERD

Because reflux from the stomach consists of acid, a main symptom of GERD is frequent heartburn or acid indigestion and a bitter acid taste in the mouth. If stomach fluid reaches the larynx (breathing tube), coughing spells also develop. These symptoms of GERD can be aggravated by certain foods such as chocolate, citrus fruits, spicy and tomato-based foods, caffeine, and alcohol or by eating just before going to bed. Heart attack and stomach ulcers may mimic heartburn.

RISK FACTORS FOR GERD

- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Cigarette smoking
- Hiatal hernia

A hiatal hernia may weaken the lower esophageal sphincter and cause reflux. This occurs when the upper part of the stomach moves up into the chest through a small opening in the diaphragm (the muscle separating the stomach from the chest) and may contribute to retention of acid and other contents above this opening. These substances can reflux easily into the esophagus. Many otherwise healthy people age 50 and over have a small hiatal hernia. Hiatal hernias usually do not require treatment. However, treatment may be necessary if the hernia is in danger of becoming strangulated (twisted in a way that cuts off blood supply, i.e., paraesophageal hernia) or is complicated by severe GERD or esophagitis.

COMPLICATIONS OF GERD

Chronic GERD may lead to

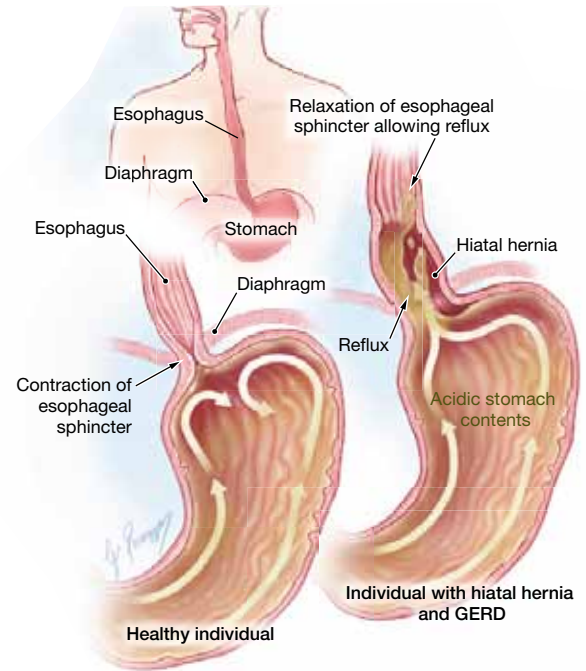
- Esophagitis (inflammation of the esophageal lining)
- Narrowing of the esophagus due to scarring
- Ulcers in the esophagus
- Barrett esophagus (change in the cells of the esophageal lining, with an increased risk of cancer)

TREATMENT

Persistent symptoms of GERD may require treatment. Your physician may recommend lifestyle changes such as smoking cessation, avoiding certain foods (fatty foods, chocolate, mint, caffeine, citrus, tomato, alcohol), losing weight if necessary, and eating not later than 3 hours before going to sleep or lying down. Also, he or she may start you on a medication that diminishes production of acid in the stomach, such as H₂ receptor antagonists or proton pump inhibitors.

PROGNOSIS

GERD symptoms usually resolve completely or almost completely within weeks of treatment. However, GERD is a chronic disease and may require lifelong treatment to prevent recurrence of symptoms or development of Barrett esophagus or cancer.



Stomach Acid Reflux

What Can I Eat?

Stomach acid reflux is a common problem.

Your doctor may recommend that you avoid foods and drinks that are known to make stomach acid reflux worse. These include fatty foods, alcohol, chocolate, caffeinated drinks (such as coffee, tea, soda), peppermint, spearmint, and spices. If you are overweight, dieting may also help.

It's alright to drink cranberry juice, apple juice diluted with water and herbal teas (except peppermint and spearmint). Drink lots of water.

Coffee Substitutes: Postum; Coffree (Swiss blend of chicory, figs, wheat, malted barley & acorns)

Foods & Drinks to Avoid

- 1 Fatty foods
- 2 Alcohol
- 3 Chocolate
- 4 Coffee, tea, caffeinated soft drinks (decaffeinated coffee still has some caffeine)
- 5 Peppermint & spearmint
- 6 Spices & vinegar
- 7 Citrus fruits & juices
- 8 Tomatoes & tomato sauces

Other Anti-Reflux Measures

- 1 Don't eat or drink for 2 hours before going to bed
- 2 Avoid lying down after meals
- 3 Elevate the head of your bed 6 inches (Use a bed wedge from any surgical supply store)
- 4 Don't wear tight clothing around your abdomen
- 5 Avoid straining, weight lifting, prolonged bending, constipation
- 6 Lose weight (if you are overweight)

Since the likelihood of reflux is increased after a meal, it is important to avoid eating or drinking for 2 hours before going to bed, except for taking any medicine prescribed by your doctor. Remember to avoid lying down after any meal.

AVOID

Acid Fruits To Avoid:

Orange
Grapefruit
Pineapple
Pomegranate
Tomato
Lemon/Lime
Sour Apple
Sour Grape
Sour Peach
Sour Plum

Sub-Acid Fruits To Avoid:

Fresh Fig
Pear
Sweet Cherry
Papaya
Mango
Cherimoya
Sweet Peach
Sweet Apple
Apricot
Sweet Plum
Huckleberry
Mangosteen

Spicy Meals In These Restaurants:

Japanese
Mexican
Thai
Chinese
Indian
Some Italian

Dairy Products

(Cause excess mucus, refrain)

Many Individuals Are Sensitive To:

Cucumbers
Scallions
Onions
Radishes
Leeks

Reflux-ACCEPTABLE Foods

(If cooked with mild herbs)

Meats

All Tenderloin, Flank, T-Bone
& Porterhouse Steak
Rib & Rump Roast
Liver
Veal
Chicken
Capons & Cornish Hens
Turkey
Loin Pork Chops
Pheasant
Quail
Venison

Fish

Sole
Halibut
Monk
Tuna
Bass
Smoked Fish
Salmon
Flounder
Haddock
Lobster
Mackerel
Perch
Pike
Shad
Scallops
Shrimp
Trout

Potatoes

All Red, White, Sweet & Yams
(No canned potatoes)

Rice

All White, Brown & Gourmets

Soups

All non-tomato, use with discretion
(Creamed soups may cause excess
mucus and/or reflux disorders)

Pasta

Pesto Sauce, Garlic & Oil
White Clam Sauce only

Vegetables & Starches

Beets
Carrots
Eggplant
(Grilled or sautéed only)
Kidney Beans
Lima Beans
String Beans
Spinach
Artichokes
Asparagus
Brussel Sprouts
Cauliflower
Buttercup Squash
Acorn Squash
Butternut Squash
Delicata Squash
Zucchini Squash
(Both yellow and green)
Gourmet Squash
Broccoli
Parsnips
Wax Beans
Brocco Flower

Sweet Fruits

Bananas
Dates
Figs
Raisins
Thompson & Muscat Grapes
Prunes
Persimmons
Melons
Strawberries
Raspberries
Blueberries
Blackberries
Sun-Dried Pears

Herbs & Seasonings

Basil Leaves
Bay Leaves
Chervil Leaves
Chives
Cilantro Leaves
Dill Weed
Marjoram
Oregano Leaves (Mediterranean)
Parsley Flakes
Rosemary
Sage
Savory
Tarragon Leaves
Thyme
Garlic
Soy Sauce
White Pepper