

Suggestions to Help Manage GERD (Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease)

Description

GERD is a condition in which the acidic contents of the stomach rise up into the food pipe and cause symptoms such as heartburn, regurgitation or nausea.

Some causes of Reflux:

- A stomach that is slow to empty
- A Hiatal Hernia (Loose muscle allowing a part of the stomach to rise into the chest)
- Weak stomach sphincter
- Increased abdominal pressure (may be caused by pregnancy, bloating, or obesity)

Diet and Lifestyle Changes

Some foods can make acid reflux symptoms worse! Common trigger foods are:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Chocolate
- Citrus juices (e.g. orange and grapefruit)
- Coffee and other drinks with caffeine
- Fried and fatty foods
- Spicy foods (including garlic, onions, and peppermint)
- Tomato-based products (e.g. tomato sauce and pizza)

There are lifestyle changes that may help reduce the symptoms of acid reflux:

- Control body weight as obesity is one of the strongest risk factors for heartburn
- Eat smaller meals
- Loosen belt because clothes that fit tightly around the waist put pressure on the abdomen
- Avoid stooping or bending for long periods of time. For example, tying shoes is okay, but bending over for longer periods to weed the garden isn't, especially soon after eating
- Avoid lying down after a meal. Wait at least 3 to 4 hours after eating before going to bed
- Raise the head of your bed. An elevation of about 6 to 9 inches puts gravity to work. Place wooden or cement blocks under the feet at the head of the bed, a

- If you smoke, STOP! Smoking can increase stomach acid. The swallowing of air during smoking may also aggravate belching and acid reflux

Diet and lifestyle modifications alone are unlikely to control symptoms in the majority of patients, in which case medications may be required. Speak to your doctor if none of the above tips work for you.