

## GERD

### Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Gastroesophageal reflux is the backflow of acid from the stomach into the esophagus. This is usually due to a transient relaxation of the sphincter at the bottom of your esophagus that is only supposed to be open when you are eating or drinking. This is a normal occurrence that affects all of us at some point in our lives. The most common symptom is heartburn, which is the burning sensation behind your breastbone, which sometimes occurs after a meal. When the reflux occurs frequently or is severe enough to cause other symptoms and/or impact your life, it is referred to as GERD. GERD is most common in persons over age 40 but just about anyone can develop it at any age. It is usually a chronic problem and usually people need life long intervention to prevent relapses.

#### Common Symptoms

Heartburn  
Difficulty swallowing  
Painful swallowing  
Sore throat  
Full feeling in neck  
Bad breath  
Belching

#### Pulmonary Symptoms

Coughing  
Wheezing  
Hoarseness  
Chest pain  
Laryngitis

GERD is treated with changes in lifestyle, medication and although rare, sometimes surgery is indicated for people with severe physical problems. Check with your doctor about other medical conditions or medications, which may be aggravating your GERD.

#### Lifestyle changes

- Diet modification (avoid spicy foods, tomato based foods, onions, garlic, citrus fruits, excess sweets, oils, fatty foods, chocolate, coffee, caffeine)
- Quit smoking
- Elevate head of bed at hours of sleep (at least 6 inches)
- Avoid overeating and obesity
- Do not burp intentionally
- Avoid tight fitting clothes
- Avoid bending over or lying down after a meal
- Avoid alcohol