

GERD

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

When you swallow, food goes from your throat, down your esophagus, through the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), and into your stomach. When the LES does not close properly, the stomach contents leak back into the esophagus. This backflow of acid from the stomach (known as reflux) can irritate and sometimes damage the lining of the inside of the esophagus.

Reflux causes an uncomfortable burning sensation, commonly called heartburn. Occasional heartburn is common, but heartburn that occurs more than two times per week is perhaps gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Symptoms of GERD

The following are symptoms of GERD:

- Heartburn
- Regurgitation of stomach acid into the mouth
- Difficulty and/or pain when swallowing
- Chest pain
- Excessive clearing of the throat
- The feeling that food is stuck in your throat
- Burning sensation in the mouth

Limit foods that may cause a problem

- Citrus fruit—oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and limes
- Spicy foods
- Chocolate
- Caffeinated beverages—tea, coffee, and cola
- High-fat foods—oil, butter, desserts, and fried foods
- Raw garlic and onions
- Mint flavorings—peppermint and spearmint oils
- Tomato-based foods—spaghetti sauce, pizza, and chili

Resources

Additional information about GERD is available at:

- The American College of Gastroenterology (ACG): www.acg.gi.org
- The American Gastroenterological Association (AGA): www.gastro.org