

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

What is it: Reflux disease, sometimes called **GERD** (gastroesophageal reflux disease) occurs when the muscle at the base of the esophagus opens either too often or for too long and allows the stomach acid to back up into the esophagus. The acid can affect the throat, sinuses and ears.

Common Symptoms: Many times these symptoms can be present without any heartburn or indigestion.

- Sensation of something sticking in your throat or a “lump” in your throat
- A need to clear the throat repeatedly
- Excess throat mucus or postnasal drip
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Hoarseness
- Difficulty swallowing
- Bad breath
- A sour taste in the mouth
- Heart burn, indigestion (sometimes)
- Worsened asthma

Things to avoid:

- Caffeinated beverages: coffee, teas, colas
- Chocolate
- Peppermint or spearmint; menthol cough drops, gum
- Peppers, green or otherwise
- Fried, fatty, or spicy foods
- Whole milk
- Acidic juice; grapefruit, orange, pineapple
- Tomatoes or tomato-based foods
- Alcoholic beverages
- Cigarette smoking
- Lying down after eating (bedtime snack)
- Anything that puts pressure on the waist or abdomen

Things to help control reflux:

- Elevate the head of the bed 6 to 8 inches
- Use blocks or telephone books under head of bed or a foam wedge under mattress if needed
- Avoid eating for 3 hours before bedtime
- Eat foods high in protein, high in carbohydrates, low in fat
- Eat small meals
- Drink non-fat milk
- Cut down or quit smoking
- Lose weight
- Avoid clothing or activities that put pressure on the abdomen
- Take your medicine as directed by your physician

It may take up to 6 months for your symptoms to improve.

- 1 Pill one hour before breakfast on an empty stomach
- 1 Pill twice a day on an empty stomach

If you are taking any proton pump inhibitors (AcipHex, Prevacid, Protonix, Prilosec, Dexilant, Zegerid, Nexium, or generic equivalent) for longer than 1 month we recommend you take a calcium supplement with Vitamin D daily as these drugs reduce calcium absorption. Please check with your primary care physician with any questions regarding calcium supplementation.

If you are taking a blood thinner, such as Plavix or Coumadin, in combination with any of the above proton pump inhibitors for your GERD, please check with your cardiologist to make sure this is a safe combination of medications for you. In some cases, this combination of medications may decrease the effectiveness of your blood thinner.