

Non-Medical Treatments cont.

- Avoiding fatty foods
- Not smoking
- Avoiding spicy or acid-containing foods, like citrus juices, carbonated beverages, and tomato juice.
- One novel approach to the treatment of GERD is chewing gum.

Medical Treatments:

- Use antacids, which neutralize the acid in the stomach so that there is less acid to reflux. These antacids include Tums, Gasex, Prilosec, and many more which are all over the counter.
- Prescription drugs, which include Nexium, histamine antagonists, proton pump inhibitors, and promotility drugs.
- In extreme cases, surgery may be recommended.

Resources & References

- www.gerdinfo.org
- www.medicinenet.com
- www.emedicine.com

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Gastric Reflux

Acid Reflux & Heartburn



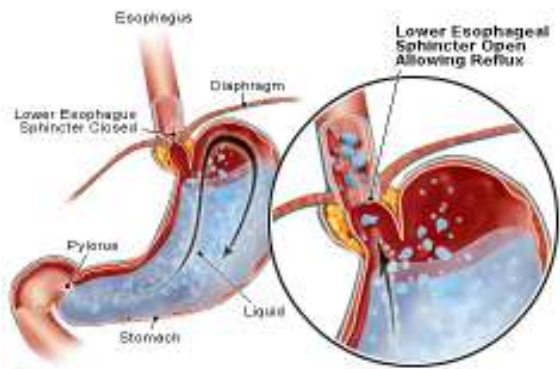
What is gastric reflux?

Gastric reflux has a medical name of gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD), which is commonly called “acid reflux” or simply “heartburn”. It is a chronic condition in which the content in the stomach backs up into the esophagus (the pathway for food to get to stomach).

The content of the stomach is very acidic, therefore when it comes up, it damages the esophagus and creates a “burning” feeling.

What causes gastric reflux?

There are many factors that can cause gastric reflux. The most common cause is a malfunctioning lower esophageal sphincter. Normally this sphincter closes and prevents gastric content from backing up into the esophagus. However, this sphincter can malfunction and relax chronically, causing stomach content to back up, especially at night when a person lies down.



Gastroesophageal Reflux

Image from www.medicinenet.com

Signs and symptoms

Heartburn:

This usually is described as a burning pain in the middle of the chest. It may start high in the abdomen or may extend up into the neck. In some patients, however, the pain may be sharp or pressure-like, rather than burning. These signs can mimic symptoms of angina, which is a heart pain. Please consult your doctor if this occurs.



Regurgitation:

This is the appearance of refluxed liquid, or “throw up,” in the mouth. Usually stomach content only ends up in the esophagus, but sometimes it can go up in the mouth. If larger quantities get backed up, people may suddenly find their mouths filled with the liquid or food.

Nausea:

This is less common in gastric reflux disease, but some people may experience it.

Complications

-The content in the stomach is very acidic, therefore it can damage (burn) the lining inside the esophagus. This can result in ulcers. An ulcer is simply a break in the lining of the esophagus that occurs in an area of inflammation.

-Ulcers of the esophagus heal with the formation of scars. Over times, these scars cause narrowing the esophagus’ pathway. This can cause difficulty swallowing and possibly food obstruction the esophagus.

-Cough and asthma can result from the esophageal damage.

-Inflammation of throat, larynx, and lungs can occur.

-Rarely, people get esophageal cancer.

-Fluid can build up in the ears and sinuses.

Treatments

Non-medical:

- Elevation of the entire bed at night.
- Eating a smaller and earlier evening meal.
- Avoiding chocolate, peppermint, alcohol, and caffeinated drinks.