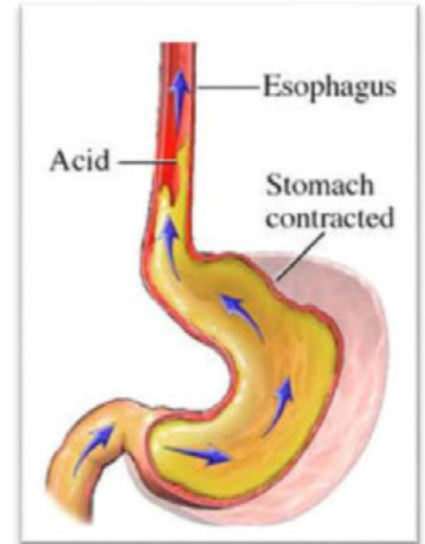




Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

What is Gastroesophageal Reflux (GER)?

- Term that refers to the backflow of stomach contents, which are acidic, into the esophagus (swallowing tube)
- Episodes can occur up to 50 times a day, usually during and after meals in healthy individuals, and not produce symptoms, GER is a normal process
- However, if you are experiencing symptoms such as heartburn, excessive burping, or regurgitation, this is known as GERD
- You may not experience these symptoms, but instead, experience cough, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, or a sensation something feels stuck in your throat (this is known GERD)



What causes GERD?

- Can be caused by a Hiatus Hernia (the upper part of the stomach and the upper stomach valve move to above the diaphragm)
- Being overweight or pregnancy can place excess pressure on the abdomen, forcing stomach acid into the esophagus
- Smoking can weaken and relax the lower esophageal sphincter (LES: a valve at the junction between the esophagus and the stomach)
- If the LES isn't working properly or relaxes inappropriately, stomach contents can reflux back up into the esophagus

Foods that Aggravate GERD:



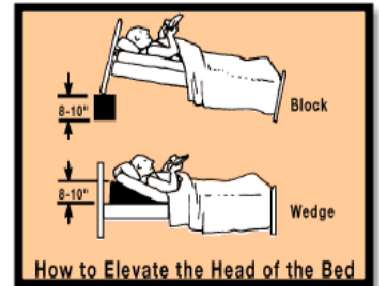
- Citrus foods
- Drinks with caffeine or alcohol
- Garlic and onions
- Spicy foods
- Chocolate
- Fatty and fried food
- Mint flavourings
- Tomato-based foods, like spaghetti sauce, salsa, chilli and pizza



GERD Treatment

Lifestyle changes

- If you smoke, consider quitting. Your health care provider can assist you with this.
- Lose weight if needed
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Avoid foods and beverages that worsen symptoms
- Eat small, frequent meals
- Avoid lying down for 3 hours after a meal
- Raise the head of your bed 6 inches by securing wood blocks under the bedposts at the head of the bed. Just using extra pillows will not help.



Over the Counter Medications:

1. Antacids (Alka-Seltzer, Maalox, and Roloids)
 - Usually first medications recommended to relieve heartburn and other mild GERD symptoms
 - Neutralize the acid in the stomach
 - Calcium carbonate antacids (Tums) can also be a supplemental source of calcium
2. Foaming Agents (Gaviscon)
 - Work by covering your stomach contents with foam to prevent reflux
3. H2 Blockers (Cimetidine [Tagamet HB], Famotidine [Pepcid AC], and Ranitidine [Zantac 75])
 - Decrease acid production
 - Available in prescription strength and over-the-counter strength
 - Provide short-term relief and are effective for about half of those who have GERD symptoms

Prescription Medications:

1. Proton Pump Inhibitors (Omeprazole [Losec], lansoprazole [Prevacid], Pantoprazole [Panteloc], Rabeprazole [Prevacid], Dexlansoprazole [Dexilant], Pantoprazole Magnesium [Tecta], and Esomeprazole [Nexium])
 - More effective than H2 blockers
 - Can relieve symptoms
 - Heal the esophageal lining in almost everyone who has GERD
2. Prokinetics (Bethanechol [Urecholine], Metoclopramide [Reglan])
 - Help strengthen the LES and make stomach empty faster
 - Metoclopramide also improves muscle action in the digestive tract
 - Frequent side effects that limit their usefulness (fatigue, sleepiness, depression, anxiety, and problems with physical movement)