Condition explainer

KSUMC · Internal Medicine

Acid reflux (GERD)

What it is and how to feel better

Gastroesophageal reflux disease

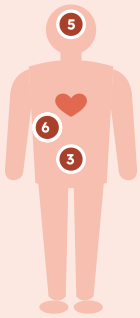


WHAT IS ACID REFLUX (GERD)?

It is when stomach contents leak back into your food pipe (esophagus). Reflux now and then is common; it is called GERD when frequent and bothersome.[1,2]

Common symptoms

1. Heartburn: a burning pain in your chest
2. Food coming back up (regurgitation)
3. Feeling sick (nausea) after eating



4. Cough or wheezing
5. A hoarse or changed voice
6. Symptoms may be worse when bending, lying down, after eating, or at night

Common causes

- A muscle ring at the bottom of the food pipe does not close fully[1]
- Being overweight, a hiatal hernia, or pregnancy[1]
- Smoking, or lying down soon after eating[1]
- Some medicines. Never stop a medicine before asking your doctor[1]

How it is treated

Treatment starts with lifestyle changes. Antacids give short-term relief. Other medicines lower stomach acid and give longer relief. Surgery may be an option if symptoms do not go away.[1]

What you can do each day

- Avoid foods that bother you, and caffeine like coffee, tea and chocolate[2]
- Avoid alcohol and smoking[2]
- Eat smaller meals more often, and avoid late-night snacks[2]
- Eat dinner some hours before bed, and stay upright after eating[1,2]
- Raise the head of your bed with blocks or a wedge, not just pillows[1,2]
- If you are overweight, losing weight often helps[1]

Most people get better with lifestyle changes and medicines. Tell your doctor if your symptoms do not improve.[1]

SOURCES

1. MedlinePlus — Gastroesophageal reflux disease
2. MedlinePlus — Gastroesophageal reflux patient instructions

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY

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