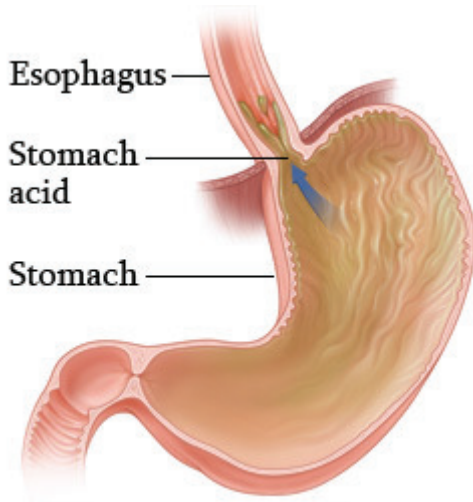


Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD): Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions



Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is the backward flow of stomach acid into the esophagus. The esophagus is the tube that leads from your throat to your stomach. A one-way valve prevents the stomach acid from moving up into this tube. When you have GERD, this valve does not close tightly enough.

If you have mild GERD symptoms including heartburn, you may be able to control the problem with antacids or over-the-counter medicine. Changing your diet, losing weight, and making other lifestyle changes can also help reduce symptoms.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Your doctor may recommend over-the-counter medicine. For mild or occasional indigestion, antacids, such as Tums, Gaviscon, Mylanta, or Maalox, may help. Your doctor also may recommend over-the-counter acid reducers, such as Pepcid AC, Tagamet HB, Zantac 75, or Prilosec. Read and follow all instructions on the label. If you use these medicines often, talk with your doctor.
- Change your eating habits.
 - It's best to eat several small meals instead of two or three large meals.
 - After you eat, wait 2 to 3 hours before you lie down.
 - Chocolate, mint, and alcohol can make GERD worse.

- Spicy foods, foods that have a lot of acid (like tomatoes and oranges), and coffee can make GERD symptoms worse in some people. If your symptoms are worse after you eat a certain food, you may want to stop eating that food to see if your symptoms get better.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco. Smoking can make GERD worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- If you have GERD symptoms at night, raise the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches by putting the frame on blocks or placing a foam wedge under the head of your mattress. (Adding extra pillows does not work.)
- Do not wear tight clothing around your middle.
- Lose weight if you need to. Losing just 5 to 10 pounds can help.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or different belly pain.
- Your stools are black and tarlike or have streaks of blood.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms have not improved after 2 days.
- Food seems to catch in your throat or chest.



Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **T927** in the search box to learn more about "**Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD): Care Instructions**".

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