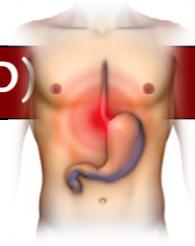


Patient Education: Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)



Q: WHAT IS IT?

A: GERD, also known as HEARTBURN or acid reflux, occurs when stomach acid backs up into your food tube (esophagus) that carries food from your mouth to your stomach.

Q: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF GERD OR ACID REFLUX?

A: The most common symptom is burning in the chest or upper stomach.

Other common symptoms include:

- Burning in the throat or an acid or sour taste in the throat.
- Trouble swallowing
- Stomach or chest pain
- Raspy voice or sore throat
- Unexplained cough

Q: HOW CAN GERD BE TREATED?

A: The most effective way to treat GERD is to reduce the amount of stomach acid going back into the esophagus. This can be done by.

- ✓ **Lifestyle changes:** Are the first and most important steps in treating GERD. See below.
- ✓ **Medications:** Over the counter **antacids** such as Tums® or Maalox® help reduce stomach acid. "Histamine type 2" acid blockers such as Tagamet®, Zantac®, Axid®, Pepcid®, as well as another class of acid blockers known as proton pump inhibitors or PPIs also can reduce stomach acid. Examples of PPIs are Prilosec® and Prevacid®. **Over the counter antacids, histamine type 2 acid blockers and PPIs may all make you feel better.** Antacids should be used 30 minutes after meals. Histamine type 2 acid blockers should be used 30 minutes before meals up to twice a day. PPIs are usually taken once each day.



IMPORTANT: If you are being treated for other health conditions ask your doctor before you take any of these medications. They may make your condition worse or make your other medicines not work well or cause other problems.

Q: LIFESTYLE CHANGES – What YOU can you do to treat GERD or acid reflux

A: Lifestyle changes are the first steps in treatment of GERD. These should continue even when medications are prescribed. Helpful lifestyle changes include:

1. **Avoid foods which cause symptoms.** Foods that may make symptoms worse include spicy and fatty foods, grapefruit and orange juices, chocolate, peppermints, coffee, tea, colas, and alcohol. Pick your foods carefully from the CDCR Heart Healthy Diet to avoid anything which causes you to have reflux symptoms. 
2. **Eat smaller meals.** Avoid overfilling your stomach.
3. **Do not lie down for 2 –3 hours after eating.** Allow gravity to help you. Avoid bending at your waist, bend at your knees instead. 
4. **Stop smoking.**
5. **Sleep on your right side.**
6. **Avoid tight clothing.** Tight belts or pants can increase pressure on the stomach.
7. **Keep your weight down.** More weight puts pressure on your stomach. Even small amounts of weight loss may help. 



ALARM FEATURES: Request a medical evaluation if you have any of these symptoms:

- **Dark black bowel movements**
- **Constant vomiting**
- **Vomiting blood**
- **Difficulty swallowing or food getting “stuck” when swallowing**
- **Weight loss**