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Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) happens when stomach contents move back into the food pipe (esophagus). This occurs when the muscle valve (lower esophageal sphincter) between the stomach and esophagus does not close properly. Stomach acid can irritate or damage the esophagus. Common symptoms include heartburn, regurgitation, a sour taste in the mouth, burping, bloating, feeling full before finishing a meal, and/or stomach discomfort after eating. It can also result in a feeling of food being stuck in the throat or chest, pain or difficulty swallowing.

Lifestyle suggestions to help manage GERD

- Eat slowly
- Eat more frequent, smaller meals throughout the day
- Avoid distractions when eating
- Avoid over-eating
- Chew food thoroughly
- Sit upright at a table
- Avoid use of straws
- Focus majority of fluid intake in between meals, rather than during meals
- Wait 3-4 hours after eating before lying down
- Sleeping on your left side is recommended, along with raising the head of bed approximately 6” with use of a wedge or adjustable electric bed. Avoid stacking pillows to raise your head.

Common triggers to avoid when managing GERD

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| • Smoking | • Tomato-based foods |
| • Alcohol | • Citrus foods |
| • Caffeinated beverages | • ‘Gassy’ foods (e.g. raw vegetables) |
| • Coffee (caffeinated or decaffeinated) | • Fatty foods |
| • Onion | • Fried foods |
| • Garlic | • Chocolate |

This handout is only intended to provide basic information to help identify and manage some common symptoms of GERD.

Further information can be obtained by contacting your primary care provider and/or a dietician.