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First in Digestive Health



What are Heartburn, Acid Reflux, and GERD?

Acid reflux, or heartburn, occurs when the lower esophageal sphincter opens spontaneously, or does not close properly, and stomach contents rise up into the esophagus. When acid reflux occurs, food or fluid can be tasted in the back of the mouth, and stomach acid may cause a burning sensation in the chest or throat. If acid reflux occurs more than twice a week, it may be due to Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, a more serious form of acid reflux that can lead to more serious problems if left untreated.

Can Acid Reflux and GERD be Prevented?

Unfortunately, acid reflux and GERD cannot be prevented, but you can make lifestyle changes that may decrease your symptoms and your risk of developing other, more serious health problems.

Acid Reflux and GERD Symptoms and Risk Factors

Acid reflux is very common and can occur in people of all ages. While there is no known cause, there are a number of symptoms and risk factors that characterize acid reflux.

SYMPTOMS CAN INCLUDE:

- ▶ Chest pain, burning, or discomfort
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Difficulty swallowing
- ▶ Hoarseness
- ▶ Indigestion

RISK FACTORS INCLUDE:

- ▶ Pregnancy
- ▶ Anatomical abnormalities, such as hiatal hernia
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Lifestyle habits, such as consuming certain foods and beverages

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Acid Reflux and GERD Testing and Treatment Options

There are a number of tests and procedures used to diagnose acid reflux, including pH monitoring, esophageal motility studies, X-ray, and upper GI endoscopy (EGD). Although patients might not be able to prevent acid reflux from developing, there are a number of treatment options available to mitigate or manage symptoms:

- ▶ Follow a special diet
- ▶ Avoid eating before bedtime
- ▶ Lifestyle changes such as weight loss
- ▶ Surgery
- ▶ Medication, both over-the-counter and/or prescription

Diet and Acid Reflux

Certain foods may cause or aggravate symptoms of acid reflux and should be avoided. Acidic fruits and juices, fried and fatty foods, tomato-based foods, garlic and onions, high-fat dairy products, spicy foods, and more are known to cause or aggravate symptoms and should be avoided. Safe foods include apples and bananas, vegetables, lean meats, and fat-free dairy products. By changing eating habits, the symptoms associated with acid reflux may be reduced or eliminated.

Acid Reflux and GERD: Capital Digestive Care

With more than 70,000 patients treated each year, a team of 57 physicians, 16 office locations, a specialized pathology laboratory, and the largest clinical research program of its kind in the region, Capital Digestive Care has the resources and diverse experience necessary to effectively treat both common and complex digestive health issues.

For more information on acid reflux and GERD, please visit
capitaldigestivecare.com/learn-about-condition/acid-reflux-heartburn-and-gerd

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