

## Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)



### Overview

This is a regular irritation of your esophagus. That's the part of your digestive system that goes from your mouth to your stomach. The irritation you feel is from acid that has escaped your stomach.

### Causes

Normally, a muscle at the bottom of your esophagus tightens to keep food and stomach acids in your stomach. If you have gastroesophageal reflux disease, this muscle doesn't stay closed. It lets acids from your stomach leak out. The acids burn the inside of your esophagus. Certain conditions like obesity, pregnancy, a hiatal hernia, asthma and diabetes can increase your risk for this disease.

### Symptoms

Acid in your esophagus can cause a burning pain in your chest. We call this "heartburn." You may also have a sour taste in the back of your throat. You may have a dry cough, sore throat, hoarseness and trouble swallowing. You may feel like you have a lump in the back of your throat.

### Treatment

Many people can manage this disease with medications. These can reduce your stomach acid. They can help heal your esophagus. They can help strengthen the valve between your esophagus and stomach. You may also benefit from changes in your lifestyle. If these options don't help, you may benefit from surgery. Your healthcare provider can create a care plan that's right for you.

