



Gastrointestinal Reflux Disease **(GERD)**

Acid reflux occurs when the contents of the stomach flow backward up the esophagus. Reflux is obvious when the patient has heartburn, a sour taste in the mouth or burping of stomach contents. SILENT REFLUX can occur without these obvious symptoms. We suspect reflux as a possible cause of:

- Persistent cough, throat clearing, chest tightness, chest pain, or choking episodes- especially if this occurs when lying down.
- Asthma in poor control despite regular medications
- Hoarseness or burning in the throat

There are many lifestyle changes that will improve reflux:

- Eat small, more frequent meals rather than large meals.
- Avoid high fat meals.
- Don't eat within two to three hours of going to bed.
- Don't lie down immediately after a meal.
- Avoid bending, straining, or tight clothes around the abdomen.
- Lose weight if overweight.
- Don't exercise immediately after eating.
- Eliminate caffeine, alcohol, carbonated beverages, chocolate, mint, and smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Elevate the head of your bed four to six inches by placing books under the legs at the head of the bed.

Medications that reduce stomach acid called "proton pump inhibitors" (PPIs) such as Nexium, Prilosec, Prevacid, Aciphex, Protonix or over-the-counter omeprazole can stop acid reflux. These work best if used about an hour before the evening meal. Sometimes twice daily medication is needed.