

# Discharge Instructions for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)



Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is when acid flows up from the stomach into your esophagus. This is the tube that goes from your mouth to your stomach. Every person has some reflux. But reflux that happens a lot can be treated. Symptoms caused by reflux can be treated, too.

## Home care

These home care steps can help you manage GERD:

- Stay at a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Don't lie down after meals.
- Don't eat late at night.
- Raise the head of your bed by 4 to 6 inches. You can do this by placing wooden blocks or bed risers under the head of your bed. Or you can put a wedge under the mattress.
- Don't wear tight-fitting clothes.
- Don't eat or drink things that might bother your stomach. This includes foods or drinks with:
  - Alcohol
  - Fat
  - Chocolate
  - Caffeine
  - Spearmint or peppermint
  - Citrus or other acidic juice
  - Peppers, garlic, onions, or similar spices
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you take medicines. Some medicines can make GERD symptoms worse. They include:
  - Calcium channel blockers
  - Theophylline
  - Anticholinergic medicines, such as oxybutynin and benztropine
- Start an exercise program. Ask your healthcare provider how to get started. Simple activities, such as walking or gardening, can help.
- If you smoke, take steps to stop. Join a stop-smoking program to improve your chances of success.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- If you are prescribed medicine for GERD, take it as directed. Don't skip doses.
- Don't take over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), unless your healthcare provider says it's OK. This includes aspirin and ibuprofen.

- Talk with your healthcare provider about treatment if you are pregnant. GERD can start or get worse in pregnancy.

## Follow-up care

Make a check-up visit as directed by our staff.

## Call 911

**Call 911** if you have any of these:

- Pain in the neck, chest, or back
- Choking, coughing, trouble breathing, or wheezing

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Trouble swallowing
- Pain when swallowing
- Feeling of food caught in your chest or throat
- Heartburn that causes you to vomit
- Vomiting blood or what looks like coffee grounds
- Black or tarry stools
- More saliva than usual
- Weight loss when you aren't trying to lose weight
- Hoarseness or sore throat that won't go away

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