

name of the disease

symptoms

causes

when to see a doctor

prevention

home remedies

GERD

What is GERD?

Sometimes, after eating a large meal or lying down too soon after eating, you might feel acid coming up into your throat. This is called gastroesophageal reflux (GER). It happens when the muscle at the end of your esophagus (the tube that carries food from your mouth to your stomach) doesn't close properly. Stomach contents can then move back up and irritate the esophagus.

Having reflux occasionally is common. But if you have symptoms two or more times a week or if they cause damage to the lining of your esophagus, you may have gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). GERD is a chronic (long-lasting) condition that can cause discomfort and, over time, lead to other health problems.

Anyone can have GERD, including [infants](#) and [children](#).

What causes GERD?

GERD can happen when the muscle at the bottom of your esophagus becomes weak or relaxes at the wrong time. You are more likely to have GERD if you:

- Are overweight or have [obesity](#)
- Are [pregnant](#)
- [Smoke](#) or are around [secondhand smoke](#)
- Have a [hiatal hernia](#) (when part of the stomach pushes up into the chest)

Certain foods, drinks, or medicines can also make GERD worse.

What are common symptoms of GERD?

The most common symptom of GERD is [heartburn](#). This is a burning feeling in your chest or throat. You can also have GERD without having heartburn. Other symptoms may include:

- Tasting acid or food in the back of your mouth
- A dry [cough](#) or hoarse voice
- [Asthma](#)-like symptoms
- [Trouble swallowing](#)

Get medical help right away if you have [chest pain](#) with [shortness of breath](#), or pain in your jaw or arm. These can be signs of a heart problem.

How is GERD diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history. They may recommend tests such as:

- **Upper GI [endoscopy](#)** to look at the esophagus and stomach lining with a tiny camera.
- **[Biopsy](#)** to check a small tissue sample.
- **[X-Ray](#)** to take pictures of the upper digestive system.
- **Esophageal pH test** to measure how often acid backs up the esophagus and how long the acid stays there.
- **Esophageal manometry** to check how well your esophagus moves food when you swallow.
- **Transnasal esophagoscopy** to look for damage to the esophagus by using a small tube with a camera.

How is GERD treated?

Most people can manage GERD with lifestyle changes and medicine. In rare cases, surgery is needed.

Lifestyle changes can include:

- Eating smaller meals and avoiding lying down for at least 2-3 hours after eating
- Avoiding foods that trigger symptoms, such as spicy foods, chocolate, caffeine, or fatty foods
- [Losing weight](#) if needed
- Raising the head of your bed
- [Quitting smoking](#)

Medicines can include:

- [Over-the-counter medicines](#), such as antacids
- Prescription medicines

If not treated, GERD can cause problems like inflammation of the [esophagus](#), scarring, or changes in the tissue lining (Barrett's esophagus). It can also worsen asthma or cause chronic (long-term) cough or hoarseness.

Can GERD be prevented?

You may be able to improve symptoms of GERD by:

- Avoiding [alcohol](#) and trigger foods
- Eating smaller meals

- Not eating close to bedtime
- Wearing loose-fitting clothes
- Sleeping on your left side or raising the head of your bed
- Maintaining a healthy weight

Risk factors

Conditions that can increase the risk of GERD include:

- Obesity.
- Bulging of the top of the stomach up above the diaphragm, known as a hiatal hernia.
- Pregnancy.
- Connective tissue disorders, such as scleroderma.
- Delayed stomach emptying.

Factors that can aggravate acid reflux include:

- Smoking.
- Eating large meals or eating late at night.
- Eating certain foods, such as fatty or fried foods.
- Drinking certain beverages, such as alcohol or coffee.
- Taking certain medicines, such as aspirin.

HOME REMEDIES

Many natural remedies are touted for heartburn relief. These remedies are generally not well-researched and should be used with caution.

These include natural remedies such as:

- **Ginger**: The root of the ginger plant can help ease reflux by accelerating the emptying of the stomach. It also contains a compound called limonene, which can neutralize stomach acids.¹⁸
- **Aloe vera**: The juice of the aloe vera plant has anti-inflammatory effects. It also coats the lining of the stomach and helps heal any damage caused by acid exposure.¹⁹
- **Bananas**: Alkaline foods, like potassium-rich bananas, can help counteract and neutralize stomach acids. As they ripen, the fruits become even more alkaline.²⁰
- **Papaya**: This tropical fruit contains an enzyme called papain, which speeds digestion by breaking down protein, fats, and carbohydrates. It also helps ease indigestion.²¹

- **Turmeric**: This aromatic spice contains a chemical called curcumin that has potent anti-inflammatory effects. This may not only help ease acid reflux symptoms but also prevent esophageal damage.²²
- **Deglycyrrhizinated (DGL) licorice**: The specially processed form of licorice may protect the esophagus from acid damage by increasing mucus production.²³
- **Honey**: Manuka honey, a type derived from the manuka tree, is especially useful at easing coughing and chest pain due to GERD and is moderately effective in neutralizing stomach acids.²⁴
- **Marshmallow root**: This herbal remedy soothes stomach irritation and inflammation by forming a protective layer over tissues. It also stimulates the cells responsible for tissue regeneration.²⁵
- **Slippery elm**: This herbal remedy is rich in a compound called mucilage that coats the stomach and acts as a barrier to stomach acid.²⁰