

# **GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)**

## **Heartburn**

### **What is GERD?**

In GERD, acid from the stomach flows backwards into the esophagus. It can feel like a burning or acid sensation in your stomach or chest. An acid taste may occur in the back of your mouth or throat, accompanied by nausea. It can last for several minutes or hours. Less common symptoms of GERD include too much saliva in your mouth, the feeling that you always have a lump in the back of your throat, ongoing cough, a sore throat, or a hoarse voice.

### **What can make it worse?**

- Smoking, alcohol, spicy and/or greasy foods, tomatoes, citrus, caffeine, chocolate, garlic, onions, and peppermint.
- Stress.
- Certain medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen (Advil®)
- Over-eating and/or eating and drinking right before going to sleep; lying flat or bending over
- Obesity.

### **What can make it better?**

- Avoid foods and medications that aggravate your symptoms.
- Eat small meals at regular intervals; lose weight if you need to.
- Decrease or stop smoking.
- Decrease or avoid caffeine; avoid alcohol.
- Avoid wearing clothing that is tight around the waist.
- Avoid lying down immediately after eating/drinking.
- Avoid eating or drinking within 2-3 hours before going to sleep.
- If you have heartburn at night, elevate the head of your bed about 4-8 inches.
- Take any medications that may be recommended by your health care provider, such as antacids (Maalox®, Mylanta®, Tums®, etc.), acid blockers (Tagamet HB®, Pepcid®, Zantac®, etc.), or proton pump inhibitors (Prilosec®).

### **Check with your health care provider if you have:**

- Abdominal pain not controlled with antacid or other prescribed medications.
- Stool that is black like tar or bloody.
- Recurrent vomiting or bloody vomit.
- Pain or difficulty when swallowing.
- Unexplained weight loss.

Check our website: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call **510-642-2000**

Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice