

GERD & Heartburn

How to Know if Your Heartburn is Actually GERD

GERD: Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

- Chronic acid reflux occurring 2+ times/week



Heartburn

- Burning chest sensation; usually after eating or lying down
- Triggered by food, drinks & large meals

Signs it Might be GERD

- Heartburn more than 2X a week
- Sour taste in mouth
- Trouble swallowing
- Lump-in-throat feeling
- Chronic cough or throat clearing; hoarseness
- Worsening asthma
- Over-the-counter medication doesn't help



- While heartburn is one symptom of GERD, not everyone with GERD experiences heartburn every time.
- Not all heartburn is GERD.

Risk Factors for GERD



- Overweight/obese
- Pregnant
- Smokers or alcohol/caffeine users
- Low fibre/high sugar diets¹
- Sedentary lifestyle

When to See a Doctor

- Reflux happens several times a week
- Sleep is affected
- Swallowing is difficult
- You have persistent cough or hoarseness
- You've had unexplained weight loss or chest pain



TREATMENT OPTIONS²

- ✓ Avoid triggers (coffee, citrus, spicy/fatty foods, carbonated drinks)
- ✓ Increase fibre; reduce fat
- ✓ Eat smaller meals
- ✓ Raise the head of your bed
- ✓ Sleep on your left side
- ✓ Lose excess weight; be more active
- ✓ Quit smoking



Your doctor may discuss or recommend:

- Antacids
- PPIs (Proton Pump Inhibitors)
- H2 Blockers



For severe cases:

- Surgery for hiatal hernia; or to strengthen esophageal sphincter



How long does heartburn last?

- Usually minutes to hours

Does milk help?

- Low-fat may temporarily soothe, but full-fat can worsen symptoms

Is GERD curable?

- Not usually - but very manageable with the right plan



While heartburn is common, if it persists, it may be a sign of GERD. Although GERD is a more serious condition, there are ways to treat and manage it.

¹ BMC Gastroenterology volume 24, Article number: 64 (2024)

² The American Journal of Gastroenterology 117(1):p 27-56, January 2022. | DOI: 10.14309/ajg.0000000000001538