

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) (Heartburn)

The stomach produces a very strong acid. It doesn't cause any damage because the stomach lining is strong enough to resist the acid.

When the acid leaks back from the stomach to the esophagus it causes a burning sensation because the esophagus wall is not designed to withstand it. This is what is known as "gastroesophageal reflux". Here are a few simple suggestions that are easy to follow and that will help relieve the symptoms.

Positioning:

- Wait for 2-3 hours after dinner before going to bed or lying down. You can drink water during this period but stay away from warm beverages and fatty foods.



- Avoid bending forward and lying down right after a meal (taking a nap, etc.).
- Elevate the head of your bed about 15 cms (6") (you can put wooden blocks under the bed legs).

Eating habits:

- Eat several small meals (about 5) a day.
- Some foods and beverages can trigger heartburn. Avoid fats in fatty red meat, lunch meat or sausages, fried foods, pastries and non-skim dairy products. Chocolate, chili peppers, lemons and sour oranges can also increase heartburn as do coffee, tea, mint, alcohol, colas and soft drinks.
- Vegetables, potatoes and seasonal fruits are recommended.

Other tips:

- Wear loose-fitting clothes to ease pressure on the stomach (do not wear tight belts!).
- If you are overweight, lose some weight to reduce the pressure on your stomach..
- Smoking makes heartburn worse so it is better to stop smoking.



- Some medication (such as aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs, some hormones, sleeping pills, etc.) can aggravate GERD. If you are taking any, you should talk to your doctor as it may be advisable to change to another.