

Acid Reflux

Symptoms, Health Risks, & Management



Advent Health



Be informed. Be empowered.

While it can be a symptom of many conditions, heartburn is the sensation usually associated with acid reflux. But heartburn doesn't always accompany acid reflux — you can have severe acid reflux with no heartburn at all. Discussing your symptoms with one of our specialists is key to diagnosing your condition.

Acid reflux occurs when acid from the stomach leaks back up into the esophagus. The resulting symptom may be heartburn. Patients with heartburn feel discomfort or burning in the upper abdomen, below the breastbone. They can also feel burning in the throat, have difficulty swallowing, or develop a chronic cough.

Signs & Symptoms

- Asthma
- Bad breath
- Change in voice
- Chest pain
- Cough
- Dental erosion
- Difficulty swallowing
- Heartburn
- Hoarseness
- Regurgitation
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is caused by chronic acid reflux. This is a progressive disease that will get worse if not properly treated. A leading contributor to this disease is hiatal hernia. This condition occurs when weakened muscle tissue allows part of the stomach to push up into the esophagus. Over time, stomach acids can damage tissue in this area. An advanced stage of this is known as Barrett's esophagus, which is also a risk factor and potential precursor for esophageal cancer.

Medication only masks and treats the symptoms, not the disease. To eliminate GERD — as well as to decrease the risk of lung disease and possible progression to Barrett's esophagus — surgery provides the only cure. Healthcare risks associated with GERD include:

- Asthma
- Barrett's esophagus
- Chronic cough
- Difficulty swallowing
- Esophageal cancer
- Loss of voice
- Lung disease

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

AdventHealth offers a full spectrum of state-of-the-art diagnostic testing including endoscopy, 24-hour Bravo® pH monitoring, esophageal manometry and 24-hour motility studies. Esophageal manometry is a procedure for measuring the strength and function of the muscles that work to push food and liquids from the mouth down to the stomach. It's often used to help diagnose swallowing problems, heartburn, and chest pain.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are a broad range of treatments for acid reflex and GERD. We provide expert advice on which option is best for your specific condition or severity.

- Endoscopic techniques
- Lifestyle modification
- Medication therapy
- Minimally invasive
- Surgery (LINX, hernia repair, and fundoplication)



Lifestyle Modification

We advise the following to help control symptoms of acid reflux and GERD:

- Avoid chewing gum or sucking on hard candy — this can increase the amount of swallowed air, which leads to belching and reflux
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing — these can cause pressure on your stomach which can cause the lower-esophageal sphincter to open and stomach contents to push up into your esophagus
- Don't lie down right after eating and avoid late-evening snacks
- Eat smaller meals more frequently instead of three large meals per day
- Elevate the head of your bed by six–eight inches to prevent reflux when sleeping
- Manage your weight effectively — obesity leads to reflux disease
- Stop using tobacco in all forms — nicotine weakens the lower-esophageal muscle that keeps stomach content from entering your esophagus



LINX® Reflux Management System

The LINX® Reflux Management System is a minimally invasive surgical procedure for people suffering from severe GERD. The LINX system consists of a small, flexible band of magnets that are surgically placed around a weak esophageal sphincter, just above the stomach, helping prevent reflux. This exciting new surgical option stops reflux at its source — unlike GERD medications that only suppress the production of acid.

Robotic-Assisted Surgery

Robotic-assisted gastroesophageal valvuloplasty is a revolutionary surgical procedure for people suffering from severe GERD. This minimally invasive procedure recreates the normal anti-reflux barrier valve between the stomach and esophagus. Most patients return home the very next day after surgery and acid-reflux symptoms are often minimized or eliminated in as little as three weeks after surgery. This procedure can also greatly decrease the risk of developing cancer of the esophagus due to GERD and Barrett's esophagus.



Transoral Incisionless Fundoplication

Transoral Incisionless Fundoplication (TIF®) is an endoscopic, outpatient treatment for GERD that uses the EsophyX® device to rebuild an anti-reflux valve to restore the body's natural protection against acid reflux. By accessing the LES through the mouth, there are no incisions and no scars — minimizing complications and leading to a quicker recovery. Advantages include:

- Does not preclude possible future treatments
- No external skin incisions — no scarring
- Very safe — lower risk for adverse reactions and complications

Let's talk in person.

For more information about the AdventHealth Acid Reflux Program, call 407-543-4655.

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