



Health and Wellness Program



PARTNERING WITH



→ LIVING WITH GERD

Nearly twenty million Americans suffer from acid reflux disease (GERD). It can affect people of all ages: infants, children and adults. The signs of GERD are:

- Heartburn
- Chest pain
- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Hoarseness
- Burping

Infants

For many infants, spitting up may be a normal part of eating, and usually stops by the first birthday. Your baby may have GERD if spitting up:

- is severe
- causes discomfort
- keeps your baby from gaining weight
- causes breathing problems
- has blood in it

If your baby has any of these signs, contact your baby's provider right away.

What you can do to help your baby with GERD:

- Stick to a regular feeding routine
- Try smaller feedings more often
- Burp your baby more often during feeding



- Sit your baby up for 30 minutes after feeding
- Make sure diapers and clothing aren't too tight around the waist
- Keep your baby away from second-hand smoke
- Talk to your provider about special types of thickening formulas or adding rice cereal to formula or breast milk

Children

Most children may have a small amount of reflux without even knowing it. In some children with GERD, acid made in the stomach damages the lining the esophagus. The esophagus is the long tube that goes from the throat to the stomach. In others, stomach acid may enter the airway during reflux.

This can cause choking, hoarseness or a constant cough. Other signs of GERD are:

- Painful swallowing
- Trouble swallowing
- Vomiting
- Sore throat
- Weight loss
- Heartburn

If your child has any of these signs, call your child's provider right away.

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What you can do to help your child with GERD:

- Offer smaller meals more often
- Stay away from eating to three hours before going to bed
- Make sure clothing is not too tight around the waist
- Raise the head of your child's bed
- Stay away from soda and other drinks with caffeine
- Stay away from any triggers such as chocolate, peppermint, spicy foods, and acidic foods like oranges, spaghetti, and pizza, fried and fatty foods.

Adults

The main sign adults have with GERD is daily indigestion. Indigestion is a burning-type pain in the middle chest, behind the breast bone. Burning-type pain may also be in the belly. A common problem in adults over 50 that can set off GERD is a hiatal hernia. An opening in your diaphragm lets your esophagus pass through. A hiatal hernia forms at the opening in your diaphragm when your stomach pushes through it.

What you can do to prevent GERD (in addition to those listed for children):

- Stay away from coffee and other drinks with caffeine
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages
- Don't smoke – talk to your provider about quitting
- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Avoid tight clothing
- When exercising, be aware that sit-ups and leg-lifts can put pressure on the abdomen; choose other types of exercise

Treatment of GERD

If signs of GERD do not get better with listed suggestions, your provider may want you to take an over the counter medication. Over the counter medications such as antacids or an acid blocker can prevent GERD symptoms. If something stronger is



needed, your provider may give you a stronger medication. Remember to take all medications exactly the way your provider tells you.

If you do not improve with the suggestions above and medications, your provider may order one of the following tests:

Upper endoscopy. An endoscope is a thin flexible tube with a light and a camera on the end. It is used to look at the lining of your esophagus and stomach. A small piece of tissue (biopsy) may be taken to help learn the cause of the damage to your esophagus.

Barium swallow. You drink a fluid containing barium. X-rays are then taken to check for ulcers, narrowing of the esophagus, hiatal hernia or other problems.

pH monitoring. In hard-to-diagnose patients, the acid levels in the esophagus are checked in one of two ways. One method uses a small tube. The tube is passed through the nose into the esophagus. The tube connected to a recording device. Reflux is measured for 24 hours. The second method uses a

wireless device that is placed at the end of the esophagus. It is left in place for one to two days and sends data to a recording device.

When to call your provider

Call your provider if you or your child has any of the following signs:

- Trouble swallowing
- Pain with swallowing
- Choking
- Vomiting
- Early fullness during a meal
- Frequent discomfort in the stomach or chest
- Breathing difficulty
- Wheezing
- Hoarseness
- Chronic cough
- Unexplained weight loss

Resources

*American Gastroenterological Association
National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive & Kidney Disease
American Academy of Pediatrics*

Si no habla o lea ingles llamé al 1-800-447-6804 para solicitar asistencia. Podemos asistirle si no hable o no comprenda ingles.