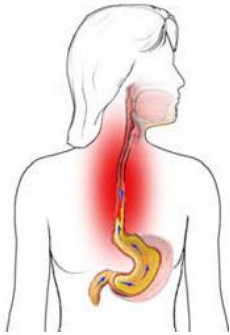


# Gastroesophageal REFLUX

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At one time or another, many adults have experienced heartburn and an uncomfortable feeling in the chest after eating a big meal or spicy foods. When these symptoms are frequent or can't be attributed to certain ingredients, they can be due to gastroesophageal reflux — also called gastroesophageal reflux (GER) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). But GERD isn't just a problem for adults — it affects kids, too. In older kids and teens, GERD can lead to heartburn, stomach, and chest discomfort.

## About GERD

The burping, and heartburn associated with GERD are the result of acidic stomach contents moving backward into the esophagus (called reflux). This can happen because the muscle that connects the esophagus with the stomach (the esophageal sphincter) relaxes at the wrong time or doesn't properly close. Many people have reflux regularly and it's not usually a cause for concern. But with GERD, reflux occurs more often and causes noticeable discomfort. After nearly all meals, GERD causes heartburn, also known as acid indigestion, which feels like a burning sensation in the chest, neck, and throat.

## Symptoms of GERD

- Heartburn is the most common symptom of GERD in kids and teens.
- It can last up to 2 hours and tends to be worse after meals.

## Diagnosing GERD

In older kids, doctors usually can diagnose GERD by doing a physical exam and hearing about the symptoms. Try to keep track of the foods that seem to bring on symptoms in your child — this information can help the doctor determine what's causing the problem.

## Treating GERD

Treatment for GERD depends on the type and severity of the symptoms.

Older kids often get relief by avoiding foods and drinks that seem to trigger GERD symptoms, including:

- Citrus fruits
- Fatty and fried foods
- Tomato – based foods and sauces
- Chocolate
- Garlic and onions
- Peppermint
- Foods with caffeine
- Spicy foods

Doctors may recommend addressing other conditions that can contribute to GERD symptoms, including obesity and certain medications — and in teens, smoking and alcohol consumption.

If these measures don't help relieve the symptoms, the doctor may also prescribe medication which can help block the production of stomach acid, or which reduce the amount of acid the stomach produces. Medications are sometimes used to reduce the number of reflux episodes by helping the lower esophageal sphincter muscle work better and the stomach empty faster.

## When to Call the Doctor

If your child is experiencing GERD symptoms, talk with your doctor. With proper diagnosis and treatment, kids can get relief and avoid longer-term health problems.

Notes from the Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_