



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### What is GERD?

GERD stands for gastroesophageal reflux disease. It happens when acid from your stomach flows backwards up into your esophagus, the tube that connects your mouth to your stomach. This is called acid reflux. Acid reflux can sometimes happen to everyone for short periods, often after eating, without causing problems. If acid reflux happens often or for long periods of time, it burns the esophagus and may cause symptoms—this is GERD. The common symptoms of GERD are heartburn (a burning feeling in the stomach or lower chest) or regurgitation (food or liquid rising back up into the throat or mouth). It can also feel like there is a constant lump in the throat. Some people with GERD may have trouble swallowing, a sore throat, a cough, a hoarse voice, nausea or pain in the upper stomach/below the ribs.



### WHAT CAUSES GERD?

GERD happens when the valve between the esophagus and stomach doesn't close properly and lets food and acid from the stomach rise up into the throat and mouth. Some things can increase the risk for having GERD:

- Eating or drinking things like high-fat foods, chocolate, coffee, alcohol or carbonated drinks.
- Being overweight.
- Smoking cigarettes.



- Being pregnant.
- Taking certain medications used for pain, infections, diabetes, blood pressure, heart disease, osteoporosis or anxiety.



### What can you do to prevent GERD?

- Don't eat or drink things that may cause GERD (see list above).
- Lose weight (if you are overweight).
- Quit smoking (if you smoke).
- Eat smaller meals more often.
- Stay sitting up after eating (don't lie down) and don't eat before bed.
- Don't wear clothes that are tight on your stomach.
- Don't exercise or bend over when you have a full stomach.
- Raise the head of your bed by about 10 cm by putting blocks under the 2 legs.
- Ask your health-care provider if any of your prescription or over-the-counter medicines may be causing your GERD or making the symptoms worse.



### When should you see your health-care provider?

You should follow-up with your health-care provider if your GERD does not get better after taking a medicine for 2 weeks. They may suggest trying a different dose or a different medicine or having some tests done to make sure nothing more serious is wrong. You should see your health-care provider right away if you:

- Have chest pain.
- Have trouble swallowing, are choking, feel pain, or feel like food gets stuck in your throat or chest.
- Lose weight without trying.
- Vomit blood.
- Have poop that is black or looks like tar.
- Feel dizzy, overly tired, are pale or have unusually cold hands or feet.
- Feel a growth or lump in your stomach or throat.



### How do you treat GERD?

Medicines that reduce the acid in your stomach will treat GERD symptoms and help stop the acid from hurting your throat. The medicines used when GERD symptoms are mild are called antacids, alginates or histamine antagonists. When GERD symptoms are stronger, they are usually treated with medicines called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs). Ask your health-care provider for help choosing the best medicine for you.

