

## Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD, occurs when acid from the stomach backs up into the esophagus. Normally, food travels from the mouth, down through the esophagus and into the stomach. A ring of muscle at the bottom of the esophagus, the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), contracts to keep the acidic contents of the stomach from “refluxing” or coming back up into the esophagus. In those who have GERD, the LES does not close properly, allowing acid to move up the esophagus. Some possible resulting symptoms of GERD are burning pain, sore throat, hoarseness, and acid taste in the mouth and throat.

The following diet and lifestyle modifications are recommended to prevent and decrease GERD:

- Lose weight if overweight and certainly do not gain weight.
- Do not overeat at any time; small, more frequent meals are better.
- Avoid smoking and alcohol.
- Do not lie down within 2-3 hours of eating.
- Avoid harshly cooked foods, fried foods, barbecue, overcooked vegetables, tomato products (soups, okra and tomatoes, tomato sauce, ketchup, juice), and orange or grapefruit juice.
- No caffeine (coffee, soft drinks, tea, and chocolate)
- Avoid peppermint
- Elevate the head of the bed 6 inches. (Pillows do not work well because you will slip off the pillow while sleeping. Instead, use bricks or blocks under the posts at the head of the bed or under the mattress.
- You may be given a prescription medication. If so, use that as directed. Otherwise, use an over-the-counter antacid product such as Gaviscon Foamtabs or Riopan Plus tabs. Chew 1 tablet 1 hour after each meal and 2 at bedtime; follow with half a glass of water.