

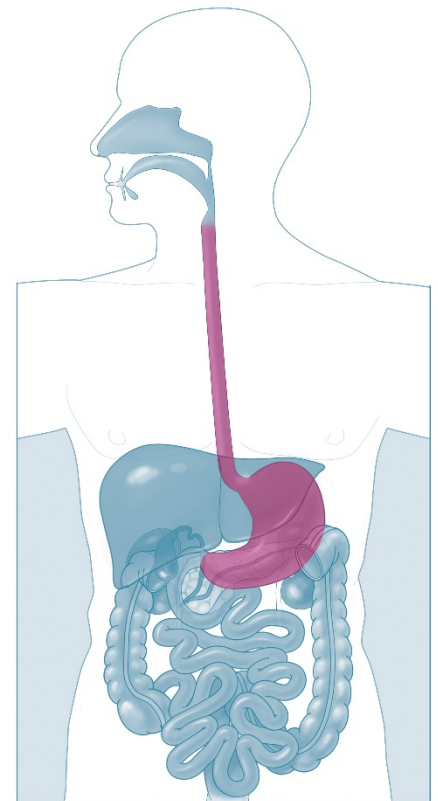
## GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

# What Is Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)?

- ▶ Gastroesophageal reflux, or just **reflux**, happens when what is inside your stomach — stomach acid, food or other contents — **backs up out of the stomach into the esophagus** (the tube that links your mouth and stomach) and possibly all the way into your throat and mouth.
- ▶ When that acid touches your esophagus (or what feels like your throat), it **can cause a burning feeling** in your chest or neck, known as **heartburn**.

*Note: Heartburn is not the same as dyspepsia (indigestion). Ask your doctor for more information on dyspepsia.*

- ▶ Most of us will have occasional heartburn, but **when your symptoms are frequent and bad enough to impact your sense of well-being, it could be GERD.**
- ▶ Heartburn is the most common symptom of GERD.



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- ▶ While GERD is **not life threatening**, it **can greatly lower your quality of life** by impacting your daily activities, your sleep and what you are able to eat.
- ▶ **Heartburn can often be avoided through changing certain habits** (like when, how much and what you eat and drink).
- ▶ Occasional heartburn **can be treated with over-the-counter (OTC) medication**.
- ▶ If symptoms don't go away or get worse after a few weeks, **talk to a gastroenterologist**. You may need some tests to rule out other health issues.



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