

## GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

# Causes

Many things can cause gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Talk to your doctor about what might be causing your symptoms.

### Muscle Weakness

- You have a muscle, the **lower esophageal sphincter (valve)**, which is found between your stomach and esophagus (the tube that links your mouth and stomach).
- **This muscle is meant to close** after food goes into your stomach and stay closed when you are not eating.
- If this muscle is weak, the valve does not work the right way and what is in your stomach can come back up (reflux).
- The muscle can become weak because of:
  - Being overweight, obese or pregnant.
  - Some medications (talk to your doctor and tell him or her exactly what you take).
  - Smoking.
  - Alcohol.
  - Getting older.

### Other Causes

- Reflux can also be **worsened by some foods**, how fast you eat and how much you eat.
- A **hiatal hernia**, which is a bulging of the stomach into the chest through the hole in your diaphragm normally occupied by the lower esophageal sphincter, can cause reflux.
  - This condition is more common with aging and obesity.

