

DID YOU KNOW?

Heartburn is known by different names: Acid Indigestion, Acid Reflux, Reflux and **GER**.

There are **2 types** of heartburn:
GER & GERD

GERD affects **20%** of the US population.

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GER:

acid reflux that happens occasionally, which is normal.

GERD:

a more serious and long-lasting form of GER

Heartburn that occurs more than 2x a week for a few weeks can be GERD.

**IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE GERD,
YOU SHOULD SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE.**

Statistics from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

DON'T LET IT BURN. PUT THE FIRE OUT. Get control over you GERD

Advance Office & Endoscopy Center
112 Kinderton Blvd. Suite 100
Advance, NC 27006

Kernersville Office & Endoscopy Center
280 Broad St. Suites F & G
Kernersville, NC 27284

King Office & Endoscopy Center
434 Kirby Rd.
King, NC 2721

Thomasville Office & Endoscopy Center
137 Mt. Calvary Rd. Suite A
Thomasville, NC 27360

Winston-Salem Office & Endoscopy Center
2025 Frontis Blvd. Suite 200
Winston-Salem, NC 27103

CONTACT US:

(336) 768-6211
www.digestivehealth.ws
www.facebook.com/DigestivehealthWS



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HEARTBURN

Is it GERD?
Does it matter?

YES IT DOES!

WHAT IS GERD?

We all have a valve at the end of our esophagus called the lower esophageal sphincter. This valve is meant to stay closed to protect our esophagus from acid.

For various reasons, this valve can become weakened and allow acid to backflow into the esophagus. This particularly happens while the stomach is releasing acid and churning to help break down and digest food. The stomach has a lining which is meant to come into contact with acid, whereas the esophagus does not!

This back flow is what most people feel when they are having symptoms of heartburn. Over time, this constant reflux will cause damage and inflammation to develop.

SYMPTOMS OF GERD

Some people will feel **burning in their chest** while others will not.

Silent Reflux:

Can often manifest as difficulty swallowing foods or liquids, a persistent cough, a change in the quality of your voice, constant clearing of your throat and sometimes even hiccups.

WHAT CAN MAKE IT WORSE?

**Obesity • Pregnancy
Certain medications • Smoking**

There are also certain foods that can make reflux worse:

- Meals high in fats and oils
- Tomatoes or tomato based foods
- Citrus foods
- Garlic and onions
- Chocolate
- Products high in caffeine
- Alcohol
- Peppermint

WHAT CAN MAKE IT BETTER?

In addition to limiting your intake of the above foods, you can also:

- Lose weight.
- Keep the head of your bed elevated at night to help gravity keep acid in your stomach while you sleep.
- Avoid laying down right after eating and make sure your last meal is at least 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid tight fitting clothing.
- Chew gum or suck on a lozenge to help promote salivation which can help neutralize acid.
- Stop smoking as this decreases salivation and promotes the effects of acid reflux.



WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If lifestyle modifications have not worked and you continue to have persistent symptoms, **your physician can prescribe medications** to decrease acidity and help promote healing of inflamed tissue in your stomach and esophagus.

Sometimes a **short term regimen** is all that is needed.

Other times you **may require longer** courses of **treatment**.

There are also **more severe symptoms** that may need further evaluation and an endoscopy.