

Heartburn

Have you ever experienced that uncomfortable feeling many people complain about?

- A burning sensation
- Pain behind the breastbone

What is heartburn and GERD, and do you suffer frequently?

- Heartburn is a common condition that affects many people. Heartburn symptoms may be caused by the reflux of stomach juices (acid) that comes into contact with the esophagus.
- Frequent and severe heartburn can be due to a condition known as GERD or gastroesophageal reflux disease.
- GERD is usually not life-threatening and can be treated; however, sometimes treatment might be difficult.
- Constant acid irritation to the throat can cause inflammation, ulcers and bleeding that with time may lead to a more serious condition called Barrett's esophagitis.

What are some lifestyle changes to help reduce heartburn?

- **Avoid** certain foods that increase stomach acid production.
 - *Fried food or food with high fat content
 - *Milk, caffeine, alcohol
 - *Chocolate, spearmint/peppermint
 - *Citrus fruits, tomato products
- **Avoid** food within 3 hours of bedtime
 - *It may help to elevate the head of your bed
- **Avoid** very large food portions
- **Lose** weight
- **Quit** smoking

What are some treatment options if you have heartburn?

- You can buy medications without a prescription that are effective for treating heartburn.
- Ask your pharmacist for help in selecting an over-the-counter (OTC) medication that's best for you.
- These medications include, but are not limited to:
 - *Antacids (Maalox®)
 - *Acid reducers:
 - *H2 Antagonists (Zantac®)
 - *Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) (Prilosec OTC®, Prevacid® 24 Hour)

If your heartburn does not go away, you should talk with your doctor.

For more information you can "Learn About Your Burn" at www.heartburnalliance.org.

