

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

An estimated 20% of the US population suffers from GERD.

1 Introduction

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a chronic condition in which stomach acid continually flows up into the esophagus, causing discomfort. GERD differs from occasional acid reflux in that it is a long-term condition that can lead to additional complications if it is not treated. It is caused by a weak or malfunctioning lower esophageal sphincter that opens at random. This allows acid to move upward from the stomach into the esophagus. GERD is found in people of all ages and can be detected via certain gastrointestinal tests.

2 Signs and Symptoms

The most common symptom of GERD is heartburn. However, there are other symptoms associated with the disease, such as:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Bad breath
- Tooth decay
- Respiratory problems
- Difficulty swallowing

If it is left untreated, GERD can cause severe damage to the

esophagus, leading to conditions including esophagitis, Barrett's esophagus and respiratory problems (e.g. laryngitis and pneumonia).

3 Risk Factors

GERD can occur in people of all ages, and at times without clear causation, but there are certain conditions that may increase the risk of developing GERD. These include:

- Obesity
- Hiatal hernia
- Pregnancy
- Connective tissue disorders
- Delayed stomach emptying

5 Treatments

Both lifestyle changes and medication can help combat the symptoms of GERD. Adjusting diet to avoid certain foods and drinks that trigger acid reflux (e.g. greasy foods, citrus fruits and alcohol) is the first line of defense against GERD. If conditions persist, acid-blocking medications (antacids, H2RAs and proton pump inhibitors) are often recommended as they reduce stomach acid, therefore decreasing the frequency of reflux. In cases of severe GERD, surgery may be needed to bring relief to patients.

Did you know?

Having to take OTC antacids more than two times a week may be an indication of GERD.

For more information on gastroesophageal reflux disease and supportive resources, please visit www.gastro.org.

References:

<https://gialliance.com/what-are-the-signs-and-symptoms-of-gerd/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gerd/symptoms-causes/syc-20361940>

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