



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) can feel like an intimidating condition, but most of the time, GERD can be managed by lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Acid Reflux	Occurs when stomach contents and acid come up through the esophagus, resulting in heart burn and burning chest pain. If this occurs more than twice a week, it is referred to as GERD.
Antacids	Used to relieve heart burn, indigestion, and upset stomach, antacids neutralize stomach acid and can also help to relieve gas.
Barium Swallow Test	A test which requires ingesting a barium solution to help to see abnormalities in the esophagus and stomach.
Esophagitis	Inflammation of the esophagus.
Endoscope	A lighted, flexible tube that is used during an endoscopy to take pictures.
Upper Endoscopy	An endoscope is inserted through the mouth to examine the esophagus, stomach, and portions of the intestines. You are sedated during this procedure.
24-Hour Esophageal pH Test	An outpatient test used to measure the pH in the esophagus. A thin, small tube with a device on the tip that senses acid is gently passed through your nose, down the esophagus, and positioned about 2 inches above the lower esophageal sphincter.
Fluoroscopy	Similar to an x-ray movie, a fluoroscopy is an x-ray technique that uses real time moving images of organs.
Fundoplication	A surgery used to treat extreme causes of GERD. The upper portion of the stomach is wrapped around the lower end of the esophagus and sutured.
Gastroenterologist	A doctor that specializes in diseases of the gastrointestinal system, including the esophagus, stomach, and intestines.
Heartburn	A symptom that feels like burning in the chest, usually caused from acids moving up from the stomach into the esophagus.
Hernia	Protrusion of part of a structure through the tissues normally containing it. A common cause of reflux is a hiatal hernia.
Paraesophageal Hernia	The lesser common type of hernia, this occurs when part of the stomach squeezes through the hiatus, landing it next to the esophagus.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your GERD.

About Symptoms

- I've had burning in my throat for past few weeks, is that a sign of GERD?
- How can I tell the difference between GERD and temporary heartburn?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- I have a hiatal hernia, did that cause my GERD? If I get it taken care of, will the GERD go away?
- I used to smoke, could that be risk factor for GERD?
- Did I get this because I am overweight?
- I eat a ton of spicy food, is that why I have this?
- My heart doctor told me to take a baby aspirin daily, did this cause my GERD? If I stop that will it go away?
- I am pregnant, could that cause GERD? Will it go away once I have the baby?

About Diagnosis

- What types of tests do I have to take to confirm a diagnosis?
- Will I be put under anesthesia for a test?
- Will the tests be painful?

About Treatment

- Can I trial lifestyle changes before I start medication?
- What will happen to me if I don't take my medication?

About Coping

- Would keeping a food diary help me to manage my symptoms?

About Living With GERD

- What types of exercises would help with my symptoms?
- Are there any foods that I should avoid?
