



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Heartburn

Heartburn can be an uncomfortable condition, but talking to your doctor about what you might be experiencing it is the first step to managing your symptoms. 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.

Dyspepsia	A combination of symptoms that can also include gastrointestinal symptoms like upper abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, and early satiety (feeling full early), even when eating small amounts of food.
Esophageal Manometry	A test that checks how effective and coordinated the muscles that propel food from your mouth into your stomach work. A small tube is inserted into your nose and guided through your esophagus and into the stomach. Sensors along the tube detect how well the muscles contract as you swallow.
Esophageal pH Monitoring and Impedance Testing	The gold standard for diagnosing acid reflux is pH monitoring. Esophageal pH monitoring is performed by placing a catheter with a pH sensor through the nose and into the bottom of the esophagus where it meets the stomach. It can also detect how much food and other gastric contents reflux into the esophagus.
H2 Blocker	Histamine H2-receptor antagonists, also known as H2-blockers, decrease acid production by reversibly blocking H2 receptors on stomach cells. They can be used in the treatment of acid reflux, dyspepsia, and duodenal ulcers.
Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)	Gastroesophageal reflux occurs when acid moves backward from the stomach into the esophagus. It occurs when the lower esophageal sphincter, a muscle that separates the esophagus and stomach, becomes weak or opens when it should not. Gastroesophageal reflux is considered a disease when symptoms become chronic and occur at least two times a week.
Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI)	A class of medication that decreases acid production in the stomach. It works by irreversibly binding to a proton pump in the cells of the stomach. PPIs relieve symptoms of heartburn and help heal stomach ulcers.
Upper Endoscopy	A procedure where a lighted flexible scope with a camera is inserted into your mouth and guided down into the esophagus, stomach, and upper part of the small intestine.
Urea Breath Test	A test that can confirm the presence of <i>H. pylori</i> , a bacteria that can cause dyspepsia and stomach ulcers, without getting a biopsy of your stomach.



Questions to Ask

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

About Symptoms

- I get heartburn symptoms on occasion. When is it necessary to pursue a medical evaluation?
- How can I tell if my symptoms are caused by acid reflux and not another condition?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Does heartburn increase my risk for other health conditions?
- What foods are more likely to trigger heartburn? How much alcohol is safe to drink if it increases my risk?

About Diagnosis

- How extensive is the work-up for heartburn?
- If my symptoms improve with over-the-counter medications like H2 blockers and PPIs, do I still need to undergo a more formal evaluation to confirm my diagnosis?

About Treatment

- Do I need to take heartburn medication every day or should I take it only when I get symptoms?
- Should I take my medications with food or on an empty stomach?
- How effective are over-the-counter treatments compared to prescription medications for heartburn?
- Are there natural remedies that can help to relieve my heartburn symptoms?

About Living With Heartburn

- What lifestyle changes are most effective to control heartburn symptoms?
- Stress can indirectly lead to heartburn. Can you show me techniques and strategies to help me better manage the stress in my life?
- Can you provide me with advice on how to quit smoking since it's been associated with acid reflux?
