

Could your indigestion be GERD?

December 24 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Heartburn. Millions of people suffer from it. But what exactly is it and, most important, could it actually be something serious?

Heartburn got its name from the [burning sensation](#) you get when acid that rises up from the stomach burns the esophagus, which is located behind the heart.

If you have [persistent symptoms](#), you may have [gastroesophageal reflux disease](#), or GERD. There is a muscle called the sphincter that controls a door-like structure at the bottom of the esophagus as it enters the stomach. With GERD, this sphincter does not work properly, allowing stomach acid to come back up into your esophagus. This is called acid reflux. GERD is the most common adult chronic condition in the United States, so here's what you need to know.

It's important to see your doctor if your symptoms are bad enough that you're taking antacids more than four times a week or if you have other serious symptoms such as [chest pain](#), difficulty swallowing, vomiting blood or dark, tar-like stools.

As long as there is no infection, your doctor may recommend weight loss if you're overweight, and that you avoid fatty, fried foods. If you drink alcohol or smoke, you will need to cut back and, certainly for smoking, eventually quit. It may help symptoms to slightly elevate the head of your bed for more restful sleep.

If you have a serious case of GERD, medications may be necessary. You may be referred to a specialist for a test called an endoscopy, so that a doctor can look inside your esophagus and stomach to diagnose your specific problem and check for any serious damage.

More information: Learn more about GERD at the [University of California, Davis](#) website.

Citation: Could your indigestion be GERD? (2019, December 24) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-12-indigestion-gerd.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.