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**Heartburn, GERD, Acid Reflux—  
What is this?**

# What is GERD?

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is present when the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) relaxes or does not close properly and stomach contents reflux into the esophagus. The LES is a ring of muscle at the bottom of the esophagus that acts like a valve between the esophagus and stomach preventing food and acid from flowing back into the esophagus.



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# What is heartburn?

Refluxed stomach acid in the esophagus causes a burning sensation in the chest or throat called heartburn. The fluid may even be tasted in the back of the mouth (acid) or described as regurgitation or indigestion.

Refluxed stomach acid in the esophagus causes a burning sensation in the chest or throat called "heartburn."

# Is GERD or heartburn dangerous?

Occasional heartburn is common, however, heartburn more than twice a week is considered GERD and can lead to more serious health problems, including strictures from chronic scarring, Barrett's esophagus (a precancerous condition), and even esophageal cancer.

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