

Editorial Note on Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Nizaj Akbul*

Department of Gastroenterology, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran province, Iran

Description

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), commonly referred to as heartburn, is a condition resulting from stomach acid moving backward from the stomach into the esophagus (the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach). The acid causes burning, inflammation and pain on the lining of the esophagus and can eventually lead to permanent damage of the lining. Tightness in the chest may also be felt, and sometimes heartburn can be confused with symptoms of a heart attack. This backward flow of acid is also called reflux when symptoms are brief and intermittent and do not cause on-going symptoms. Many people experience acid reflux from time to time. GERD is mild acid reflux that occurs at least twice a week, or moderate to severe acid reflux that occurs at least once a week. Most people can manage the discomfort of GERD with lifestyle changes and over-the-counter medications. But some people with GERD may need stronger medications or surgery to ease symptoms. The term "gastroesophageal" refers to the stomach and esophagus. Reflux means to flow back or return. Gastroesophageal reflux is when what's in your stomach backs up into your esophagus. In normal digestion, your LES opens to allow food into your stomach. Then it closes to stop food and acidic stomach juices from flowing back into your esophagus.

Gastroesophageal reflux happens when the LES is weak or relaxes when it shouldn't. This lets the stomach's contents flow up into the esophagus. The most common symptom of GERD is heartburn (acid indigestion). It usually feels like a burning chest pain that starts behind your breastbone and moves upward to your neck and throat. Many people say it feels like food is coming back into the mouth, leaving an acid or bitter taste. The burning, pressure, or pain of heartburn can last as long as 2 hours. It's often worse after eating.

Lying down or bending over can also result in heartburn. Many people feel better if they stand upright or take an antacid that clears acid out of the esophagus. People sometimes mistake heartburn pain for the pain of heart disease or a heart attack, but there are differences. Exercise may make heart disease pain worse, and rest may relieve it. Heartburn pain is less likely to go along with physical activity. But you can't tell the difference, so seek medical help right away if you have any chest pain.

Conclusion

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) occurs when stomach acid frequently flows back into the tube connecting your mouth and stomach (esophagus). This backwash (acid reflux) can irritate the lining of your esophagus. In most people, GERD doesn't cause serious complications. But in rare cases, it can lead to serious or even life-threatening health problems.

In most cases, lifestyle changes and medications are enough to prevent and relieve symptoms of GERD. But sometimes, surgery is needed. For example, your doctor might recommend surgery if lifestyle changes and medications alone haven't stopped your symptoms. They might also suggest surgery if you've developed complications of GERD. There are multiple types of surgery available to treat GERD.

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*Corresponding author: Nizaj Akbul, Department of Gastroenterology, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran province, Iran, Email:

Akbulnizaj@gmail.com

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