



For more information or an appointment, contact our office.

LEESBURG | THE VILLAGES | TAVARES | CLERMONT

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Getting to the Heart of Heartburn

You enjoyed the meal — but now you're paying for it, big time, with an uncomfortable burning sensation rising up the middle of your chest. It can hit after eating spicy foods or when you lie down.

“Sometimes the pain is so intense you may think you're having a heart attack,” said Dr. Ismail. “In most cases, you're simply experiencing heartburn, the most common gastrointestinal malady.”

While heartburn is obviously a nuisance, most people can manage the discomfort of heartburn with lifestyle modifications or over-the-counter medications. It's usually not a sign of serious illness. Still, countless hours and untold sums of money are spent every year looking for a way to spell relief.

However, frequent or constant heartburn can be a symptom of something more serious called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), a condition you should discuss with your physician. For those who have symptoms more than two times a week for more than two years, a specialist may be in order.

Burning Questions About Acid Reflux

GERD is a disease in which stomach acid or bile flows back (refluxes) into your food pipe (esophagus). This can irritate the lining of your esophagus, causing it to get inflamed.

Symptoms of GERD include chest pain, especially when you're lying down, difficulty swallowing (feeling like food gets “stuck” between your throat and stomach), chronic coughing, wheezing, asthma, hoarseness, sore throat, and sour throat and mouth.

“If you have GERD, you may need more potent medications to reduce symptoms and heal the inflammation in your esophagus. As a rule, men come to us

for diagnosis and treatment at a later stage in the process, and run a risk of developing a pre-cancerous condition called Barrett's Esophagus,” said Dr. Ismail. “Your doctor can assess your risks and help you control symptoms and prevent complications.”

According to the Academy of Family Physicians, you may want to ask your healthcare provider these questions about GERD:

Could my symptoms be caused by GERD?

Do I need to be checked or treated for GERD?

About Your Risk of Developing GERD

Am I at increased risk for GERD?

Are there specific foods I should avoid to lower my risk of developing GERD?

Does being overweight increase my risk?

Can stress or smoking increase my risk?

About Treatment Options

Are over-the-counter medications sufficient to control GERD?

What prescription medication options do I have?

What side effects are associated with these drugs?

Will they interact with other medications, over-the-counter products, or dietary and herbal supplements I am taking?

At what point should I consider surgery?

About Lifestyle Changes

What lifestyle changes can I make to help manage or control GERD?

Do I have to eat a completely bland diet to control GERD?

Are there any restrictions on exercise?

Can you give me some advice for quitting smoking?

About Outlook

Are there complications that I should be concerned about?

How can I avoid these complications?