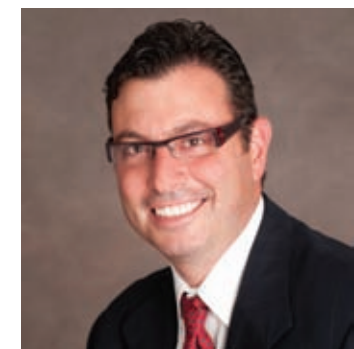




Burning Questions About Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease



WRITTEN BY: KENNETH GLAZIER, MD
GASTROENTEROLOGISTS OF
OCEAN COUNTY

Most of us at one time or another has suffered from heartburn. We have all seen the ads for the numerous acid suppressing medicines. The question is when to take notice of these symptoms and to seek the advice of a doctor.

What is GERD?

Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is a condition related to stomach acid backing up into the esophagus. The esophagus is the food tube that connects the mouth to the stomach. At the bottom of the esophagus is a muscle called the lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The job of the LES is to squeeze the bottom of the esophagus

tight to prevent the stomach acid from splashing up and burning the esophagus. It is supposed to stay closed at all times except when we swallow, belch or vomit. The LES can inappropriately relax causing acid to enter the esophagus. When stomach acid enters the esophagus it can damage the lining of the esophagus and cause symptoms such as a burning sensation in the chest called heartburn. Reflux may be so severe that a person may believe they are having a heart attack. Atypical symptoms can also occur like excess belching, hoarseness, sore throat, asthma, or chronic cough.

What can I do to prevent GERD?

There are a number of life-style and dietary changes that can be tried for most people with GERD. Avoiding foods and beverages that can inappropriately relax the LES is recommended, such as fatty foods, spices, tomato products, coffee, alcohol and sodas. Stopping cigarette smoking and losing weight if overweight can improve symptoms. Behavior modifications such as elevating the head of your bed

on blocks or using a specifically designed wedge will help keep the stomach contents and acid in the stomach. Decreasing the size of portions of dinner and eating dinner 2 to 3 hours before bedtime can also avoid night time GERD.

What medicines are used to treat GERD?

Medicines used to treat GERD include antacids which neutralize acid already produced by the stomach. Other medicines like H2-blockers and proton pump inhibitors suppress the production of acid by the stomach. These medicines are used to prevent symptoms of heartburn and aid in healing of acid induced injury. These

medicines are available both over the counter and by prescription. Prescription medications are usually stronger and may give better relief of symptoms.



When should I worry about GERD?

There are certain alarm symptoms that may indicate a more serious condition than just typical GERD. If someone with heartburn has problems swallowing, weight loss, nausea, anemia, or blood in the stool then they should tell their doctor. Patients who have had heartburn more than five years or have heartburn starting after the age of 45 should also be concerned and notify their doctor. Alarm symptoms may indicate bleeding ulcers, scars in the esophagus called strictures or even cancer of the esophagus. If medications are required for more than an occasional use or for prolonged periods of time it is important to discuss with your doctor. Patients with heartburn for a long time dramatically increase their risk for developing Barrett's esophagus and cancer of the esophagus.

What is Barrett's Esophagus?

Barrett's Esophagus is a permanent change in the type of cells lining the esophagus in a reaction to chronic acid injury. This condition is associated with an increased risk for the development of cancer of the esophagus. Esophageal cancer is increasing in incidence more rapidly than any other type of



Meet The Doctors Of Gastroenterologists Of Ocean County. (Sitting l-r) Omar Tamimi, MD, Jill Collier, MD, and Allan Cohen, MD. (Back row l-r) Jai Mirchandani, MD, Edgar Bigornia, MD and Kenneth Glazier, MD. We perform endoscopic procedures in the convenience of our two office based endoscopy centers. We aim to provide the highest quality of compassionate medical care and perform endoscopies in a convenient, friendly, non-threatening office setting. We serve patients from many different backgrounds which is mirrored in the diversity of our physicians.

cancer. Barrett's esophagus is most commonly diagnosed in Caucasian males in their fifties to sixties. Barrett's Esophagus and cancer of the esophagus are best diagnosed with upper endoscopy.

What is Endoscopy?

Upper endoscopy is a painless procedure that is performed in our outpatient endoscopy center. The test may only take five minutes to perform. The test is performed by a gastroenterologist while you sleep. An anesthesiologist is also involved to provide sedation through an intravenous needle. The doctor will take a pencil thin tube with a light and a camera on the tip and slide it into your mouth and follow the pathway the food takes down the esophagus, stomach and small intestine. These areas can be carefully examined, photographed and biopsied. The risks of complications from the test are very small. There are no alternative tests that can allow the doctor to take important biopsies of the esophagus which are necessary to diagnose Barrett's esophagus and cancer of the esophagus.

As you can see heartburn may not just be a symptom to grin and bear, but may represent a serious health problem. It is therefore very important to talk to your doctor if your symptoms are long standing, require chronic medication therapy or are associated with alarm features.

PATIENT TESTIMONIALS

"This was my second time here for an upper endoscopy. Both times were very good experiences. Your staff "all" are very friendly and provide an atmosphere of conformability. Also the cleanliness of the building and procedure rooms are outstanding."

- Vivian, Toms River

"Dr. Glazier is so informative. He takes his time with you. Everyone is concerned for your comfort. The facility is beautiful and clean. The nursing staff is very friendly and knowledgeable. Everyone took their time with me and made me feel very relaxed and comfortable. Dr. Glazier is so nice and so informative every step of the process he will take. I really like him and I trust he will be able to help me with my gastric problems."

- Susan, Bayville

"The nurses and doctors were excellent. I appreciate everything you did for me. Dr. Glazier is wonderful!!"

- Maria, Howell

GASTROENTEROLOGISTS OF OCEAN COUNTY

ALLAN COHEN, M.D. **OMAR TAMIMI, M.D.**
JILL COLLIER, M.D. **EDGAR BIGORNIA, M.D.**
KENNETH GLAZIER, M.D. **JAI MIRCHANDANI, M.D.**

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473 & 477 Lakehurst Rd. 7 Sherwood Dr. 939 Lacey Rd. 355 Route 9
Toms River, NJ 08755 Lakewood, NJ 08701 Forked River, NJ 08731 Bayville, NJ 08721
732-349-4422 732-367-3338 609-971-5949 732-237-2800