

## **GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease)**

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, also known as “heartburn” or “reflux”, refers to the stomach content coming back up into the esophagus. The majority of fluid in the stomach available for reflux is acid. When acid comes into contact with the esophagus, it literally causes a chemical burn. Reflux over a long period of time can lead to scarring of the esophagus in a process known as an esophageal stricture. This can lead to a narrowing of the esophagus and more serious conditions.

In order to prevent/control GERD, it is important not only to take your medicine as prescribed, but also to follow certain lifestyle guidelines:

- Diet – Avoid greasy, fatty, fried and spicy foods. Avoid chocolate, peppermint & caffeine.
- Avoid tobacco – stop smoking and/or chewing or dipping tobacco.
- Avoid alcohol
- Do not eat and immediately lie down. Sit upright for at least 1.5 hours after a small meal and at least 2.5 hours after a large meal.
- Being overweight aggravates reflux. Watch your weight.
- Do not exercise immediately after eating, as this will make reflux worse.
- If you have heartburn at night, you may want to elevate the head of your bed on four (4) inch blocks. Simply sleeping on more pillows may actually increase reflux.
- If you need to supplement your prescribed acid blocker with over the counter antacids, do not take them within one hour either before or after taking any other medication as it may not be absorbed.