

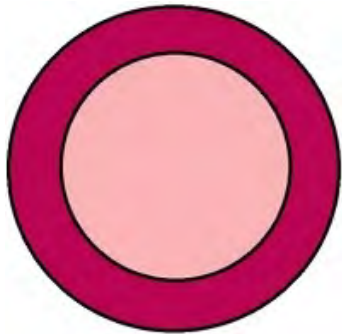
Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disorder (GORD)



Your food pipe (called the oesophagus) is a tube that runs from your mouth to your stomach.



Your stomach is where your food is digested.



There is a ring of muscle between your food pipe and your stomach.

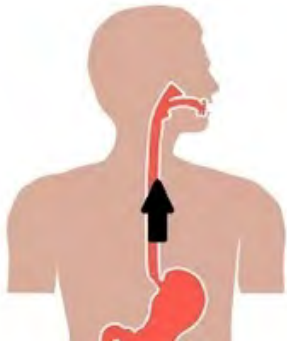


When you eat, food travels down your food pipe.

The ring of muscle between the food pipe and your stomach opens to let the food go into the stomach.



The ring of muscle then closes again, so that food or acid from your stomach cannot go back up into your food pipe.



Sometimes this ring of muscle is not able to close properly.

Some food and acid from your stomach can then flow back up into your food pipe towards your throat.



This causes **heartburn** – a painful burning feeling in your chest.



If you have heartburn every now and then, this isn't dangerous.



If you keep getting a lot of heartburn, it is called gastro-oesophageal reflux disease or **GORD**.



This can cause more serious problems.



Things that can cause this are:

- Eating some foods and drink.



- Being overweight.



- Smoking.



- Being pregnant.



- Feeling worried and anxious.



Having a **hiatus hernia**.

This is when part of your stomach moves up into your chest.

You can have this without knowing.



The Symptoms of GORD

Symptoms are signs that something is wrong.

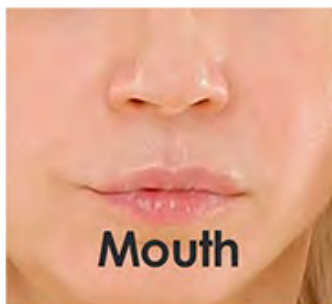


Signs that show you might have GORD are:

- **Heartburn.** Pain your chest which may move up towards your neck and throat.



This can last from a few minutes to 2 hours.



- Feeling like food is coming back up into your mouth, giving you a bitter taste.



You may also have:

- A cough or hiccups that keep coming back



- A hoarse voice.



- Bad breath.



- A bloated and sick feeling.



You will probably feel these things most:

- After eating.



- When you are lying down.



- Or when you bend over.



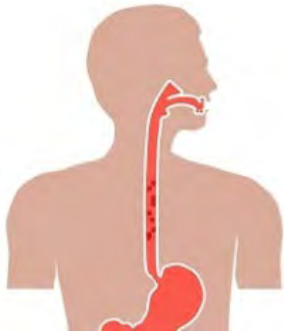
GORD can sometimes cause other serious problems:



- A long-term cough.



- **Laryngitis** – when you can only speak in a whisper.



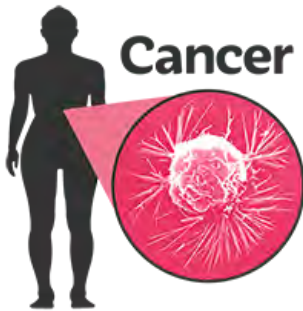
- Bleeding or ulcers in the food pipe.



- Problems swallowing.



- Changes to the tissue lining the inside of the food pipe – this is known as Barrett’s oesophagus.



- In a very small number of people this can lead to cancer.



Treatment & Care for GORD

Making some changes to your diet and lifestyle can help.



Do:

- Eat smaller portions at meal times.



- Eat your dinner at least 2 hours before you go to bed.



- Raise the end of your bed where you put your head by putting something about 10-20 cm high under your bed or mattress.

This will help your body keep food down in your stomach.



- Lose weight if you are overweight.



- Find ways to relax.



Don't eat foods which make the muscle between your food pipe and your stomach weak.

They are:



- Chocolate.



- Peppermint.



- Fatty foods.



- Coffee.



- Citrus fruits and juices (like oranges).



- Tomatoes.



Don't smoke.

Smoking makes the muscle between your food pipe and stomach weaker.



Don't drink too much alcohol.



Taking medicine

You can buy some medicines to help you to feel less pain from heartburn.

These are called **antacids**.



You can ask the pharmacist in your local pharmacy for advice.



Seeing your doctor

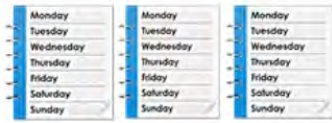
You should see your doctor if:



- You have tried making changes to your diet and lifestyle but do not feel better.



- You have tried taking medicine but do not feel better.



- You have heartburn most days for 3 weeks or more.



- Food is getting stuck in your throat.



- You are sick a lot.



- You have lost weight (without trying to).



Your doctor can make sure that these symptoms are not a sign of something serious.



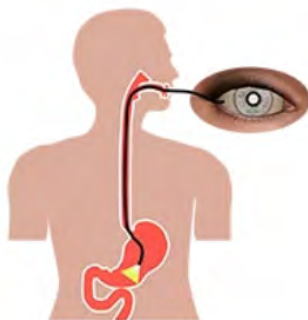
Your doctor can give you some stronger medicine to help.



If your heartburn is really bad and does not get better, you will need to have some tests to find out what is wrong.

These might include:

- **An endoscopy.**



A small tube with a tiny video camera on the end is put into your food pipe to look into your stomach.



- **A biopsy**

A very small piece of the inside of your food pipe is taken away for doctors to look at.



- **A special x-ray**

Photographs of the inside of your body are taken.



If nothing else has made your heartburn better, you might be able to have **an operation** to make the muscle between your food pipe and stomach stronger.