



Gastro Oesophageal Reflux Disease (GORD)

What is GORD?

Gastro Oesophageal Reflux occurs when acid or other fluid in the stomach passes back up the oesophagus (Food pipe). A small amount of reflux is normal and occurs throughout the day. Where the oesophagus joins the stomach there is a valve to stop excessive fluid from the stomach refluxing into the food pipe. This valve is also known as a sphincter. If it is not working properly excess reflux can occur. If there is excessive reflux of acid or fluid from the stomach to the food pipe it can cause symptoms. Excessive reflux can also cause erosions or ulcers in the lower food pipe.

Symptoms

A common symptom is heartburn (A burning discomfort behind the breastbone) It can also present with a feeling of fluid rising up to the mouth or an acid taste in the mouth. Chest pain and belching can also be due to GORD. GORD can also trigger coughing or a hoarse voice but these are less common symptoms.

What can make GORD worse?

Anything that increases the pressure in the stomach to overcome the sphincter/valve can lead to reflux.

Eating large meals, eating fast, being overweight, smoking, excessive alcohol and

fatty meals lead to reduced pressure in the sphincter/valve which can also make GORD worse.

Hiatus hernia

This a very common condition where the upper part of the stomach that is joined to the oesophagus slips up into the chest through a hole (called a hiatus) in the diaphragm. Normally the diaphragm also helps to strengthen the valve/sphincter in the food pipe but when there is a hiatus hernia they no longer work together and reflux is more likely to occur.

Treatment

Lifestyle changes

- Avoid eating large meals and eating too quickly
- Avoid fatty or fried foods
- Lose excess weight
- Stop smoking

Medications

Antacids: Use as required to neutralise acid that has refluxed.

Acid lowering medications: (e.g. Losec, Somac, Solox. There are several others in the same class of acid lowering medications) the acid component in the fluid that is refluxed is the main thing that causes symptoms and can damage the food pipe. Therefore acid lowering medications are very effective in stopping symptoms and damage to the food pipe.

Surgery: To strengthen the valve/sphincter

