Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Acid reflux, also called “Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease” or “GERD”, occurs when stomach acid backs up into the esophagus. This can cause a burning feeling in the chest or throat, an acid taste, difficulty or painful swallowing, a sore throat, or a raspy voice.

The following tips can help to relieve your symptoms.

**Diet Changes:**
- Eat 4-6 smaller meals each day, rather than 3 large meals.
- Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Wait at least 2-3 hours after eating before laying flat or going to bed.
- The following foods may worsen your symptoms. Avoid these foods if they bother you.
  - Black or red pepper
  - High-fat or fried foods
  - Coffee (regular or decaffeinated)
  - Black tea (regular or decaffeinated)
  - Alcohol
  - Chocolate
  - Peppermint or spearmint (e.g. tea, gum, or candy)
  - Coffee (regular or decaffeinated)
  - Caffeinated beverages
  - Carbonated beverages
  - You may find other foods are irritating. It is important to change your diet and lifestyle based on what improves your symptoms.

**Lifestyle Changes:**
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Raise the head of your bed 6-8 inches if you have nighttime reflux. Use a wedge under the mattress or blocks of wood under the legs of the head of the bed. Extra pillows are not helpful, and may worsen reflux.
- Chew gum or use oral lozenges to increase saliva and help clear acid from your throat.
- Stop smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- Limit or reduce stress in your life. Try yoga, listening to music, exercise and sports, or any other activity that you find relaxing.