



GEORGIA PERINATAL

CONSULTANTS

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX

WHAT IS GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX?

Gastroesophageal reflux (GER) is a condition where the acidic stomach contents flow backwards into the esophagus to cause a variety of symptoms including heartburn and a bitter taste in one's mouth. This usually occurs because of poor function of a sphincter at the end of the esophagus that allows the back flow to occur. Sometimes a hiatal hernia, a condition where the junction of the esophagus and stomach lies in the chest cavity instead of the abdomen, is associated with GER. If the stomach contents spill over into the air passages, asthmatic symptoms such as coughing and wheezing can occur. Often times these symptoms occur while lying down or during sleep, but troublesome symptoms may persist even during the day.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MINIMIZE GER?

- Elevate the head of the bed by 6 inches.
- Do not eat or drink anything for several hours before bedtime.
- Avoid foods likely to cause excessive acidity such as fatty, spicy or acidic foods.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Avoid caffeinated products.

If symptoms persist, your physician may recommend an over-the-counter or prescription antacid, depending on severity of symptoms.