Acid reflux disease, also known as GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), is a very common condition. The main symptom of GERD in adults is frequent heartburn, also called acid indigestion. Heartburn is described as a burning-type pain in the lower part of the mid-chest, behind the breast bone, and in the mid-abdomen. But, many patients who have GERD do not have heartburn symptoms. Some people experience cough, voice hoarseness, wheeze or have excess mucus in their airway causing frequent throat clearing.

Studies have shown that more than 75 percent of patients with asthma also experience GERD, and are twice as likely to have GERD as those people who do not have asthma. Although the exact relationship between the two diseases is not known, GERD appears to act as a trigger for asthma attacks.

Ways to Avoid GERD

Limit caffeine – Drink no more than two to three cups of coffee a day. Also limit the consumption of other caffeine drinks, such as tea and soda.

Do not overeat or drink large amounts of liquids with meals.

Avoid tight clothing – This can increase the pressure on the stomach, pushing acid into your esophagus (the food tube leading to your stomach).

Avoid certain types of food that can cause symptoms:

- Spicy and fatty foods
- Tomato and citrus juices (such as grapefruit and orange juices)
- Chocolate and mints
- Alcohol

Do not lie down for two hours after a meal.

Stop smoking – If you have asthma you shouldn’t be smoking at all!

Maintain your ideal weight – Extra weight increases the amount of pressure placed on your stomach. Even small weight loses can help with GERD.

Antacids – Antacids taken before sleeping and after meals can be helpful – ask your doctor for directions.

Bed blocks – Elevate or raise the head of your bed four to six inches using foam wedges or bed blocks. Sleeping on extra pil- lows is NOT a good substitute.

Avoid bending at the waist; bend at the knees – This helps to keep the content of your stomach from moving back up your esophagus.

Acid Suppression Medications – For serious GERD problems, your doctor can prescribe medications that will suppress acid in the stomach.

For more asthma resources visit pamf.org/asthma
GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease)

GERD is due to the backflow of stomach contents in the esophagus. It is also called acid reflux disease. The esophagus is a tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach. There is a ring of muscle between the esophagus and the stomach, which normally helps keep stomach acid from entering the esophagus. It is called the lower esophageal sphincter (LES).

NORMAL
The LES is closed most of the time. When closed, it helps stop the stomach acid from moving up into your esophagus. It opens when you swallow to let food into the stomach.

GERD
In people with GERD, too often the LES is weak or relaxed so that it cannot adequately stop the reflux of the acid. The acid backs up into the esophagus. This can damage the lining and cause symptoms such as heartburn.

Nighttime GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease)

Many people with GERD get their symptoms at night. That’s because if the LES is too weak or relaxed, it is easier for stomach acid to flow into the esophagus and stay there for a long time when you are lying flat. This can damage the lining.