

Most people experience infrequent or occasional acid reflux symptoms, but if your symptoms are persistent, you may be at increased risk for damage to your esophagus. At Pioneer GI Clinic, the board-certified gastroenterologists offer complete diagnostic testing and treatment services to give you relief from persistent acid reflux. The providers customize care plans using medications to control your symptoms and prevent Barrett's esophagus and other complications.

What is acid reflux?

Acid reflux is a backflow of stomach acids into your esophagus, the tube that connects your mouth to your stomach. The acids can irritate the lining of your esophagus and cause a variety of uncomfortable symptoms, such as:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Chest burning and pain
- Difficulties swallowing
- Feeling a lump in the throat
- Regurgitation of food or sour liquids

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) describes chronic acid reflux that happens at least twice a week. With this condition, your symptoms may be more persistent and severe.

What causes acid reflux?

Acid reflux and GERD can develop due to weakness in the lower esophageal sphincter muscle. Normally, this muscle opens to let food pass through to the stomach and then closes again. When the muscle is too weak to close fully, stomach acids can move back up into your esophagus.

You may also be at increased risk for acid reflux and GERD due to:

- Obesity
- Smoking
- Pregnancy
- Hiatal hernia
- Eating spicy foods or large meals
- Use of certain medications, alcohol, or coffee

If left untreated, GERD can lead to scar tissue that narrows your esophagus. This can cause breathing and swallowing issues. Esophageal damage can also cause precancerous changes in the lining of your esophagus, a condition known as Barrett's esophagus.

How is acid reflux diagnosed?

In addition to a physical exam and a review of your medical history, the providers at Pioneer GI Clinic offer diagnostic testing services like Bravo™ pH monitoring. In this test, you swallow a capsule that measures the pH levels of your esophagus. This helps determine if acid levels are high enough to cause damage.

If you have GERD, the physicians may perform an upper endoscopy to assess your esophagus for damage. During this procedure, they insert a lighted scope with a camera to check for damage and precancerous tissue changes.

Based on the results of your testing, the providers customize a treatment plan to relieve your symptoms and prevent long-term esophageal damage.

How is acid reflux treated?

Occasional acid reflux is often manageable with over-the-counter antacids that neutralize stomach acids. If your symptoms are more persistent, you may need prescription medications to reduce acid production.

If damage is present in your esophagus or your symptoms aren't treatable with medications, you may need fundoplication surgery to tighten the lower esophageal sphincter muscle.

The Pioneer GI Clinic providers can also suggest lifestyle and diet changes to help you manage your weight and prevent recurrent acid reflux symptoms.

Call Pioneer GI Clinic today to schedule a diagnostic evaluation for acid reflux.