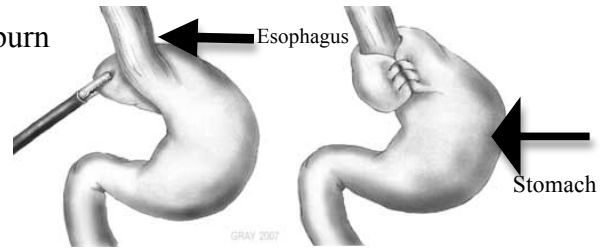


# Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

**Title:** Corrective surgery for constant heartburn

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**Plain Language Summary:**

## **What is heartburn?**

Heartburn is a burning feeling in a person's chest. This feeling can be painful or uncomfortable. It often occurs after a person eats or when they lie down. Heartburn occurs when the liquid made by the stomach goes into the esophagus. The esophagus is a tube that brings food from your mouth into your stomach. Usually this tube is not exposed to stomach liquid because it tightens when food is in the stomach. If this tube (the esophagus) does not tighten like it should, a person can have heartburn.

## **How is heartburn treated?**

Heartburn can get better if a person changes what they eat. Avoiding chocolate, fried foods, and high-fat meat and cheeses can help. Avoiding drinks like caffeine, alcohol and soda will also help. Many times a person will need medical treatment. There are many different pills a person can take to treat heartburn. These drugs lower the acid in a person's stomach liquid. Some of these drugs can be bought over-the-counter at the drug store.

Sometimes a person can have heartburn that is not helped by even the strongest drugs. Also, some people may not want to take these drugs because of side effects. These people may benefit from surgery. This surgery is called a laparoscopic fundoplication. A picture of this operation is above. Here part of the stomach is wrapped around the esophagus, making it tighter. This will help keep the stomach liquid in the stomach.

## **What are the benefits of surgery?**

Most people (about 9 out of every 10) say their heartburn was better after the surgery. Most people have also said that they can swallow easier. People that have needed this surgery say that they have a better life without heartburn. Most people also say they would have the surgery again if given the choice.

Also, the stomach liquid can damage the esophagus if someone has heartburn too long (years). Surgery will help heal this damage in most people.

## **What are the negative effects of surgery?**

There are risks associated with every surgery. These risks include infection, bleeding and side effects of sleeping medicines. These risks are rare.

There are other complications of this surgery. Sometimes, people will need to have additional surgery if the first one does not work. Often this is because people can have difficulty swallowing or because the surgery did not help. Patients may also develop a hernia from the first surgery.

Even after the surgery, about 1 in 5 people will still need to take medicine to help their heartburn.

## **How will I know if surgery is right for me?**

A decision can be made after discussing the risks and benefits with your doctor.

## **I still have questions, where can I go for more information?**

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease Surgery: National Institute of Health  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002925.htm>

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease Surgery: WebMD  
<http://www.webmd.com/heartburn-gerd/fundoplication-surgery-for-gastroesophageal-reflux-disease-gerd>

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease Treatment: Mayo Clinic  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/gerd/DS00967/DSECTION=treatments-and-drugs>

5 key words:

GERD

Heartburn

Anti-reflux surgery

Esophageal cancer

Upper GI endoscopy

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