

Title: Asthma and Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease: What are they and how are they related?

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Abstract: It has been shown that persons with asthma have more acid-reflux or GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease) than the general population. This has led some physician scientists to suspect that the two may be related. This education tool discusses this relationship and the possible benefits of GERD treatment for asthma sufferers.

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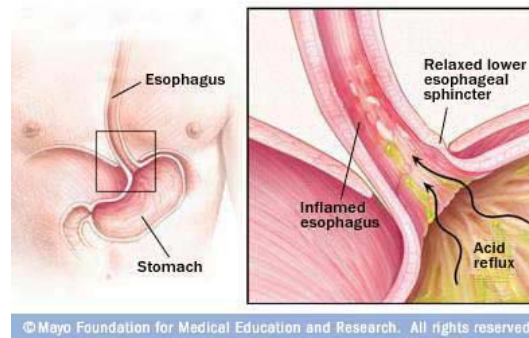
## What is GERD? (Gastro-esophageal reflux disease)

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GERD is a term doctors used to describe what some call “acid-reflux” or “heartburn.” It is a chronic condition of the digestive tract that occurs when food contents go backwards (reflux) into the food pipe (esophagus.)

Symptoms of GERD can include:

- Burning sensation in mid-chest
- Chest Pain
- Sour taste in throat/mouth
- Regurgitation of food or sour liquid
- Dry Cough
- Hoarseness
- Difficulty Swallowing



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## For Further Information:

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### Cleveland Clinic

[http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/gastroesophageal\\_reflux\\_gerd/hic\\_gerd\\_and\\_asthma.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/gastroesophageal_reflux_gerd/hic_gerd_and_asthma.aspx)

[http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/asthma/hic\\_asthma\\_an\\_overview.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/asthma/hic_asthma_an_overview.aspx)

### Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/asthma/DS00021>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/gerd/DS00967>

## University of Minnesota

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## Asthma and GERD

What are they and how are they related?

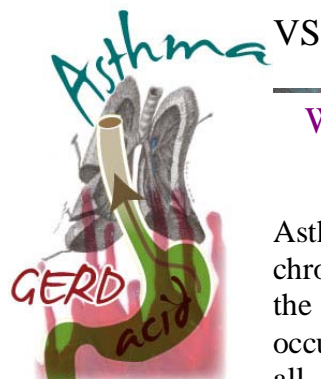
Studies have recently shown that up to 75% of adults who have asthma also have symptoms of GERD. This pamphlet will:

- Explain what asthma and GERD are
- Discuss the relationship between them
- Help you decide if treatment of GERD may benefit your asthma

*GERD stands for Gastro-esophageal reflux disease.*

Images: Achoogallery.com

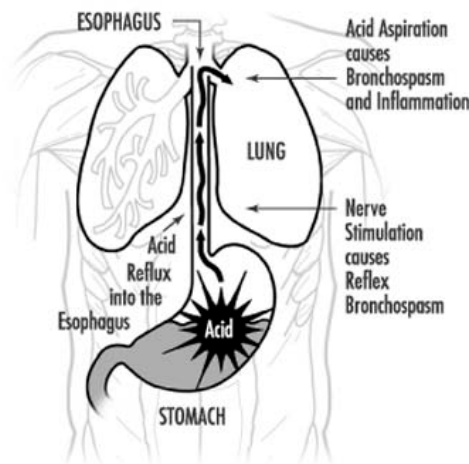




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### What causes Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs that occurs in people of all ages. People with asthma suffer because their bronchi (airways) are reactive—in other words, they react to certain triggers in the environment that cause the muscle layers that line these spaces to tense up, or constrict. When this happens, the airways become too small to exhale well. Also, the tissues in the lungs get swollen, contributing to the difficulty. To make matters worse, the cells in the airways then respond by producing extra mucus, which plugs up the airways, also making it difficult to breath.



The image illustrates how asthma and GERD may be related.

Image rights: TheAsthmaCenter.org

### Is there a Relationship between Asthma and GERD?

Occasionally, patients who have GERD will reflux food contents all the way up into their throat.

The stomach contents are very acidic and can be damaging to our cells.

- 1) If they reflux, they can then be inhaled into the lungs, triggering spasm of the airway lining.
- 2) Acid in the throat may be triggering a nerve to cause muscle spasm in the airways.
- 3) B-Agonists, one of the more common treatments for asthma, may be causing or worsening symptoms of GERD.

These theories are currently under examination by scientists and will be evolving—please ask your doctor.

#### Common Symptoms of Asthma:

- Frequent coughing, especially at night
- Wheezing
- Shortness of Breath
- Chest tightness or chest pressure

#### Common Triggers of Asthma:

- Allergies
- Molds, Pollens, Dust, Pet Dander, Smoke
- Temperature/Humidity
- Exercise/Stress

If you have severe asthma and also experience reflux, your quality of life may benefit from daily treatment of your GERD with a PPI (Proton Pump Inhibitor.) *Please ask your primary care doctor for more information about this.*