

## **GastroEsophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)**

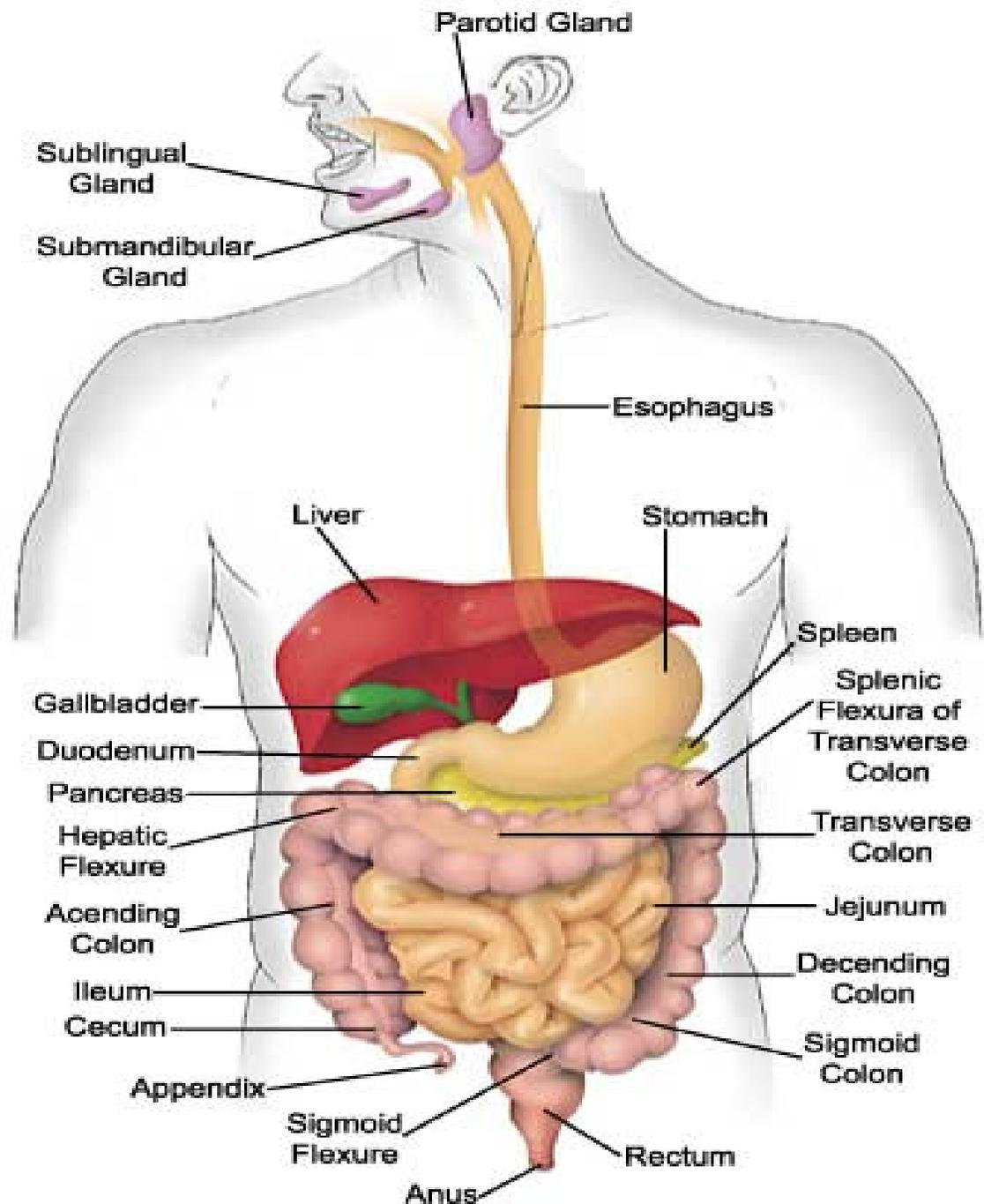
**GERD** is the condition causing heartburn or indigestion especially after eating. It is a painful burning or extremely hungry sensation just below the breastbone. **GERD** sensations are caused when food and stomach acids wash back up into the esophagus when the sphincter between the esophagus and stomach becomes weakened. This reflux can cause wheezing, constant throat clearing, hoarseness, coughing, or a feeling of a lump in your throat. There are many things you can do to help yourself feel better. Medications can work but they work better if you make a few changes in how you eat.

### **Things you can do:**

1. Stay upright after eating. Avoid bending over or straining right after eating as this puts pressure on the stomach and the passage of food through the digestive tract.
2. Do not lie down after your evening meal for 3-4 hours to allow your food to pass through your stomach. Try not to eat after 7pm to prevent nighttime symptoms.
3. Elevate the head of your bed 4-6" to allow gravity to help prevent symptoms.
4. Stop smoking. Smoking worsens this condition.
5. Avoid tight clothing around the abdomen.
6. Maintain or achieve a normal weight. Even 5-10 pounds of weight loss can significantly affect your GERD symptoms.
7. Avoid jogging if this activity causes your symptoms to worsen.
8. Avoid aspirin. Aspirin-containing medications are Ecotrin, Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve and others.
9. Make relaxation and mild exercise a part of your day, to help your body relax.

### **Foods to Avoid:**

1. Tomato sauces.
2. Citrus like grapefruit, orange, lemon, and tangerine.
3. Caffeine, which is found in coffee, tea, most sodas, chocolate, and cocoa. Mountain Dew is especially high, whereas decaffeinated coffees have very little caffeine.
4. Alcohol such as beer, wine, after dinner liqueurs and hard liquor.
5. Very greasy foods like French fries and deep fried meats or vegetables. Whole milk may also cause discomfort.
6. Other foods may also be irritating: licorice, peppermint, spearmint, garlic, and onion.



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