

TOOELE Transcript Bulletin

Don't let digestion troubles hamper the holidays

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A healthy digestive system is essential to feeling well, particularly during the holidays when comfort foods abound.

Heartburn and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or acid reflux, affect approximately 20% of adults in the U.S.

What is GERD?

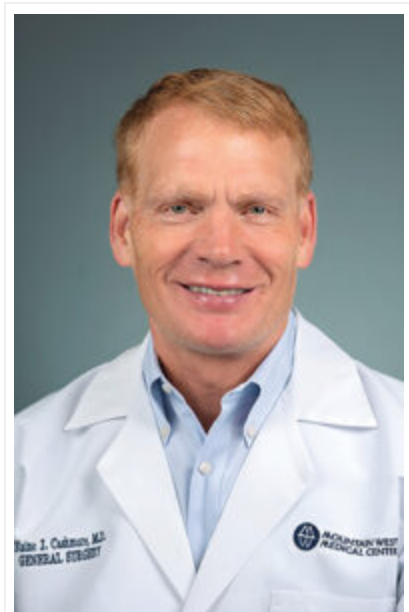
GERD occurs when stomach acid frequently flows back into the esophagus, leading to irritation and uncomfortable symptoms like persistent heartburn, regurgitation, difficulty swallowing, a consistent cough, nausea, and a sour taste in the mouth.

How do you know if you need treatment for GERD?

While most people with GERD have mild symptoms, if left untreated, constant reflux and irritation of the esophagus can lead to complications such as tissue damage, difficulty swallowing, or even cancer.

“Many people don't realize that untreated GERD isn't just uncomfortable—it can lead to serious health risks,” said Dr. Blaine Cashmore, General Surgeon at Mountain West Medical Center. “The good news is that for people with persistent GERD symptoms, there are ways to manage and even resolve GERD effectively.”

Tips to Manage GERD During the Holidays



Dr. Blaine Cashmore is a general surgeon and Acting Chief of Staff at Mountain West Medical Center.

To help you avoid digestive discomfort this holiday season, here are five tips to manage GERD:

1. Eat slower, smaller meals: Instead of the traditional three meals, focus on smaller meals throughout the day. Take your time while eating, chewing your food thoroughly to help your digestive system.

2. Go for a walk after your last meal. Heartburn often results from eating a large meal and going straight to bed. Try to avoid eating at least two hours before you lay down.

3. Avoid triggers like:

Alcohol, caffeine, and carbonated beverages

Mint in any variety, including gum or desserts

Acidic foods, such as tomato-based meals, vinegar, and citrus

Spicy food and seasonings like hot sauce and pepper

Fried foods, processed meats, and heavy cream sauces

Sugary foods and beverages like soft drinks, cakes, and cookies

4. Maintain a healthy weight: Overweight individuals are more likely to suffer from GERD. Focus on eating whole foods and following your doctor's exercise recommendations.

5. Quit smoking: Nicotine can increase inflammation, acid exposure, and coughing while weakening the lower esophageal sphincter.

To diagnose possible digestive issues, you may need to see a specialist who can perform treatments like TIF (transoral incisionless fundoplication). TIF is an incisionless approach to treating GERD that addresses the condition's root cause—a weakened valve at the junction of the stomach and esophagus. Doctors can reconstruct the valve using the TIF procedure, restoring its ability to prevent acid reflux.

Acid reflux can sometimes lead to hiatal hernia, a condition where the opening in the diaphragm becomes enlarged. In these cases, surgical repair may be needed. Using minimally invasive techniques, this repair can be done laparoscopically and paired with a procedure like TIF for a comprehensive solution.

The Benefits of TIF

TIF offers several advantages over traditional GERD surgeries:

No Incisions: Reduced risk of infection, minimal scarring, and faster recovery.

Shorter Hospital Stays: Most patients go home the same day.

Improved Quality of Life: Many patients experience long-term relief from GERD symptoms, often eliminating the need for daily medications.

“As the only certified general surgeon in Utah performing TIF with or without hiatal hernia repair, I am proud to bring this advanced treatment option to our community,” said Dr. Cashmore. “My goal is to provide patients with safe, effective, and minimally invasive solutions to reclaim their lives from GERD”.

Call 435-228-0061 to schedule a consultation with Dr. Cashmore. You can also make an appointment at MountainWestAnytime.com.

Source: Yale Medicine, gi.org/topics/acid-reflux/