

# Is Your Holiday Meal Hard To Swallow? Keep Reflux Disease Out Of Your Celebrations

(NAPSA)—A special meal with family and friends is often at the heart of holiday gatherings. For those suffering from GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), however, this usually comforting tradition may bring painful and distressing symptoms.

GERD is a disease characterized by stomach acid flowing back (refluxing) into the food pipe (esophagus). Repeated backwash of acid can irritate the lining of the esophagus.

The most common symptom of GERD is heartburn, often following a meal. Other bothersome symptoms might include pain when swallowing, a sensation that food is sticking in the throat, chronic sore throat, hoarseness or other conditions that indicate possible damage to the lining of the esophagus.

Of course, overindulgence can cause anyone to feel uncomfortable. But a person with GERD feels these symptoms on a regular basis.

“When symptoms occur more than once a week, or become severe, it is important to consult a physician for proper diagnosis and treatment advice,” notes Nancy J. Norton, President of the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD).

Many people who suffer from GERD put off seeing a doctor because the discomfort temporarily subsides and does not seem serious. However, if ignored or not properly diagnosed by a physician, GERD can sometimes lead to complications such as erosion of the esophagus, bleeding, narrowing of



**Don't lie down within three hours of eating. That's when your stomach is full. Plan early dinners and avoid bedtime snacks.**

the esophagus or, in some cases, a potentially precancerous condition called Barrett's esophagus.

“No one needs to suffer from GERD; your physician can help relieve your symptoms,” notes G. Richard Locke III, M.D., head of the Esophageal Interest Group, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, Minn. “If you have food getting stuck in your food pipe, you should definitely see a physician.”

“Once diagnosed, GERD can be treated and, in most cases, patients can begin to lead far more comfortable lives,” adds Norton. Often, treatment involves changes in what and how one eats. For those who are overweight, losing excess pounds may help. A doctor may also recommend medications, which can reduce the amount of acid the stomach produces. Other treatments may include surgery or endoscopic procedures to help prevent reflux.

For more information about GERD, visit [www.aboutgerd.org](http://www.aboutgerd.org) or call IFFGD toll-free at (888) 964-2001.



**Note to Editors:** While November 19-25, 2006 is GERD Awareness Week, this story can be run at any time.