

Care Gram

Barrett's Esophagus

What Is Barrett's Esophagus?

Barrett's Esophagus is a condition in which the tissue lining the tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach (esophagus) changes to the type of tissue found in the lining of the intestines.

What Causes Barrett's Esophagus?

A small number of people who have chronic heartburn or reflux disease (GERD) will develop Barrett's Esophagus. This is due to the splashing of stomach acid back into the esophagus over a long period of time. The body tries to prevent further damage to the esophagus by replacing normal tissue with the type of tissue found in Barrett's Esophagus.

Some people who do not have heartburn or acid reflux disease will develop Barrett's Esophagus for unknown reasons. Barrett's Esophagus is more common in males.

How Will I Know if I Have Barrett's Esophagus?

Your doctor will do a test called an endoscopy. While you are sedated, the doctor will pass a lighted tube with a camera (endoscope) down your throat to look at the tissue in your esophagus. A small tissue sample will be taken to check for changes.

What Is the Treatment?

There is treatment to reverse this condition. However, measures to prevent acid reflux will help the esophagus heal and slow the growth of abnormal tissue.

- Do not eat anything within three hours of bedtime.
- Eat smaller meals.
- Avoid smoking and tobacco products.
- Avoid certain foods, such as:
 - Fatty foods
 - Mints
 - Citrus fruits and juices
 - Milk
 - Caffeine
 - Tomato products
 - Chocolate
 - Carbonated drinks
 - Pepper seasoning
- Do not use alcohol, especially red wine.
- Do not wear tight clothing.
- Do not bend over after eating.
- Raise the head of your bed or mattress 6-8 inches. This keeps acid in the stomach by using gravity. Pillows are not very helpful alone.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Take prescribed medicine for reducing acid. Newer medicines can get rid of stomach acid entirely and are always needed to treat severe GERD.
- It is important to have repeat exams done on a regular basis. Barrett's Esophagus does increase the risk for cancer in the esophagus. Although the risk is small, regular exams will allow pre-cancerous cells to be treated before cancer develops.

This Care Gram is for information purposes only. It may become out-of-date over time. Ask a doctor or a healthcare professional about your specific condition.



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