

GERD

No, the article this month is not about a man called Gerd! GERD is the **abbreviation**, at least in American English for: gastroesophageal reflux disease. The oesophagus becomes **irritated by too much acid**.

Various lifestyles and/or **medical conditions** may cause **heartburn** and **acid** reflux. Among these conditions are: overweight, smoking, diabetes, **hiatus hernia** and **pregnancy** to mention but a few. The symptoms of heartburn and acid reflux may **accompanied by**

inflammation of the **vocal folds**, as well as pain in the area of the upper **sternum**, and a sour taste in the mouth. In the case of a hiatus hernia, part of the **stomach lining** pushes into the oesophagus when the **oesophageal sphincter** no longer closes correctly. A lot of people have **slackening** of the sphincter, but most are not affected by it. It's when symptoms **persist** that people realise there is something wrong.

Male pharmacy customer: Hallo. Do you speak English?
PTA: Hallo. Yes, I do. How may I help?

On and off for the past months I have been waking up in the middle of the night with a pain in my chest and a horrible sour taste in my mouth. Recently, it's been happening during the day too. It's very unpleasant.

This pain in your chest, does it **radiate** out into your arm?

No, not really. If it did I think I'd go to my doctor.

Yes, that is right. Do you notice these symptoms after eating certain food, or drinking any type of alcohol?

Well, now that you ask...yes, I notice it when I've eaten very oily food or food with lemon juice in it or when I drink anything like orange juice.

And you don't smoke, do you?

No, never have. Don't like the things. Why?

I think you are suffering from something called acid reflux and smoking is one of the causes of reflux.

I don't like the sound of that! What can I do?

Firstly, I recommend that you start taking this very effective antacid. It's usually the first step to start **alleviating** the symptoms. It shouldn't be taken over a longer period though as it can cause **constipation** or diarrhoea.

Isn't there anything a little stronger?

Yes, we also have this OTC **proton pump inhibitor**.

A proton pump inhibitor? What does that do?

Basically, what a PPI does is reduce gastric acid production over a longer period.

Where is the difference between an antacid and a PPI?

An antacid deals directly with the symptoms of acid, the reflux and the horrible taste. A PPI on the other hand, not only reduces gastric acid, at the same time it also gives the oesophageal lining a chance to heal.

Well, I think it's not that bad yet! So, I'll start with an antacid and if that doesn't help in the next couple of days, I'll come back for the PPI. What do you think?

I think that's a very **sensible** idea. And if nothing works, you may need to go to your doctor and ask about a **gastroscopy**.

Thank you. Goodbye.

Bye, bye! ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

GERD	gastroösophageale Refluxkrankheit
abbreviation	Abkürzung
irritated	gereizt
medical condition	Erkrankung
heartburn	Sodbrennen
acid	Säure
hiatus hernia	Zwerchfellbruch (ugs.)
pregnancy	Schwangerschaft
accompanied by	begleitet von
inflammation	Entzündung
vocal folds	Stimmrippen
sternum	Brustbein
stomach lining	Magenschleimhaut
oesophageal sphincter	Speiseröhrenschiließmuskel
slackening	locker werden, bzw. erlahmen
persist	anhalten
radiate	ausstrahlen
lemon juice	Zitronensaft
alleviate	lindern, verringern
constipation	Obstipation, Verstopfung
proton pump inhibitor (PPI)	Protonenpumpenhemmer
sensible	vernünftig
gastroscopy	Magenspiegelung