

# GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) refers to the backing up of gastric contents into the esophagus, causing irritation of the esophageal mucosal and eliciting an inflammatory response. The esophagus may become inflamed (esophagitis) and ulcerations may develop in the esophagus if left untreated.

## Assessment

- Pyrosis (heartburn, low sternal or epigastric pain) especially after a large meal or with bending forward
- Esophagitis
- Pharyngitis
- Hoarseness
- Water brash (excess saliva stimulated by acid reflux)

## Planning and Implementation

- Eat 4 to 6 small meals per day
- Upright position while eating and for one hour after meals
- Avoid hot and cold beverages
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco
- Avoid eating before bedtime
- Administer antacids, H2 blockers, and proton pump inhibitors as ordered

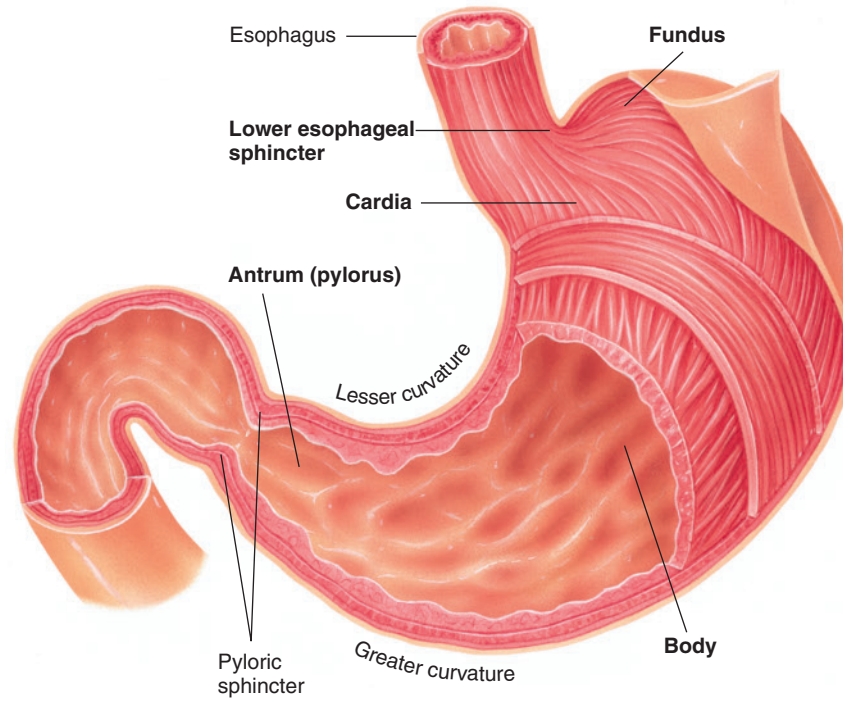
## Evaluation and Outcomes

The patient will:

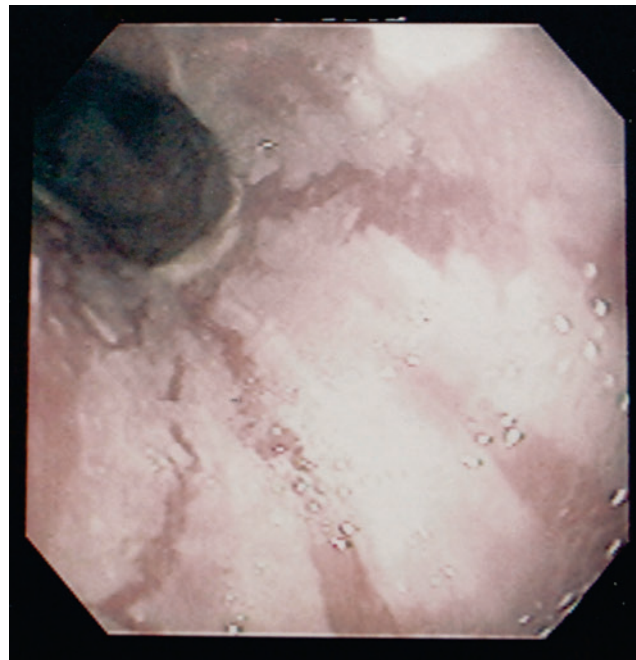
- Be free of dyspepsia
- Understand pharmacologic treatment
- Avoid irritants such as fatty foods, alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine

## Nursing Considerations

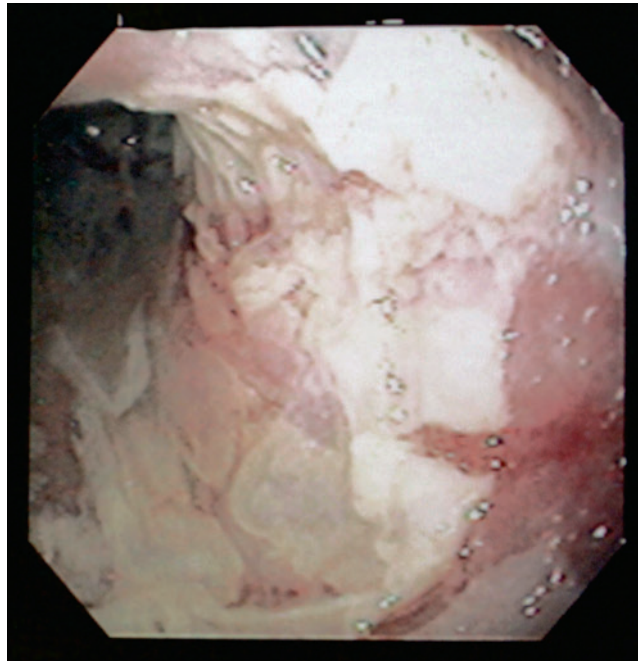
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- Weight reduction may help decrease symptoms in the obese patient.
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- Teach patients to elevate head of bed by 8 to 12 inches to prevent reflux at night.
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- Teach patients to avoid wearing clothing that is tight around the waistline.
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- Teach patients to eat frequent small meals and avoid eating two to three hours before sleeping.
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- Teach patients to sit upright for one hour after meals.
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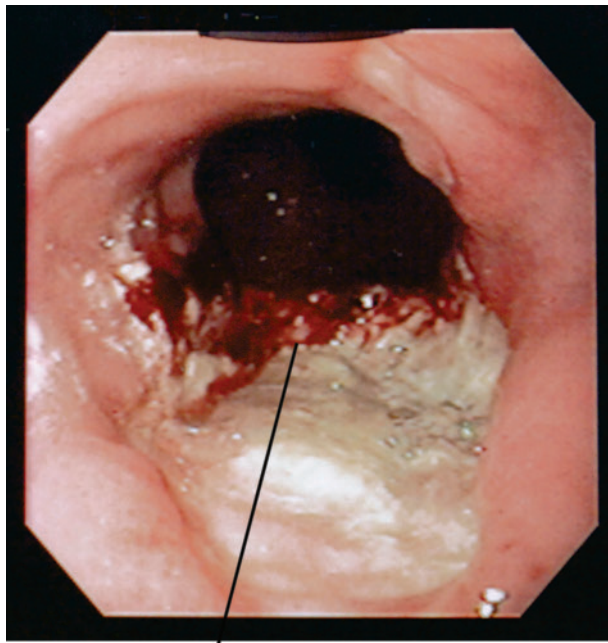
*The normal anatomy of the esophagus and stomach. The lower esophageal sphincter stops stomach contents from backing up into the esophagus. In gastroesophageal reflux disease, the esophageal sphincter fails and the acid from the stomach backs up into the esophagus.*



*An endoscopic image of esophagitis. Esophagitis is a common finding in patients with gastroesophageal reflux disease. The whitish areas seen are the result of reflux of stomach acids seen in GERD.*

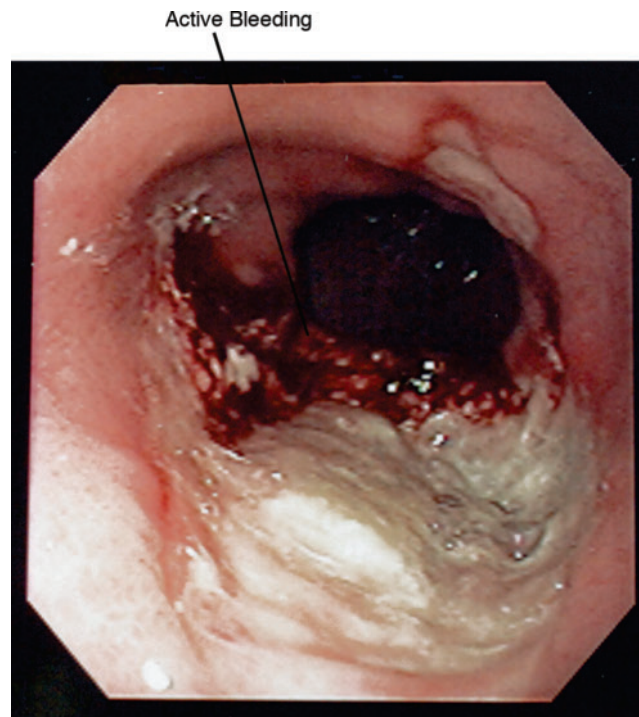


*An image of severe esophagitis as seen through an endoscope. Instead of pink tissue, the lining is white in color.*



**Bleeding From Ulceration**

*An esophageal ulcer seen through an endoscope. The patchy white area is the ulceration and fresh blood is seen at the top of the whitish area.*



*A large esophageal ulceration. Note the blood seen at the base of the white ulceration. The patient would present with bloody emesis and would require an immediate endoscopy to cauterize the bleeding area.*