

# GERD

Gastroesophageal  
Reflux Disease



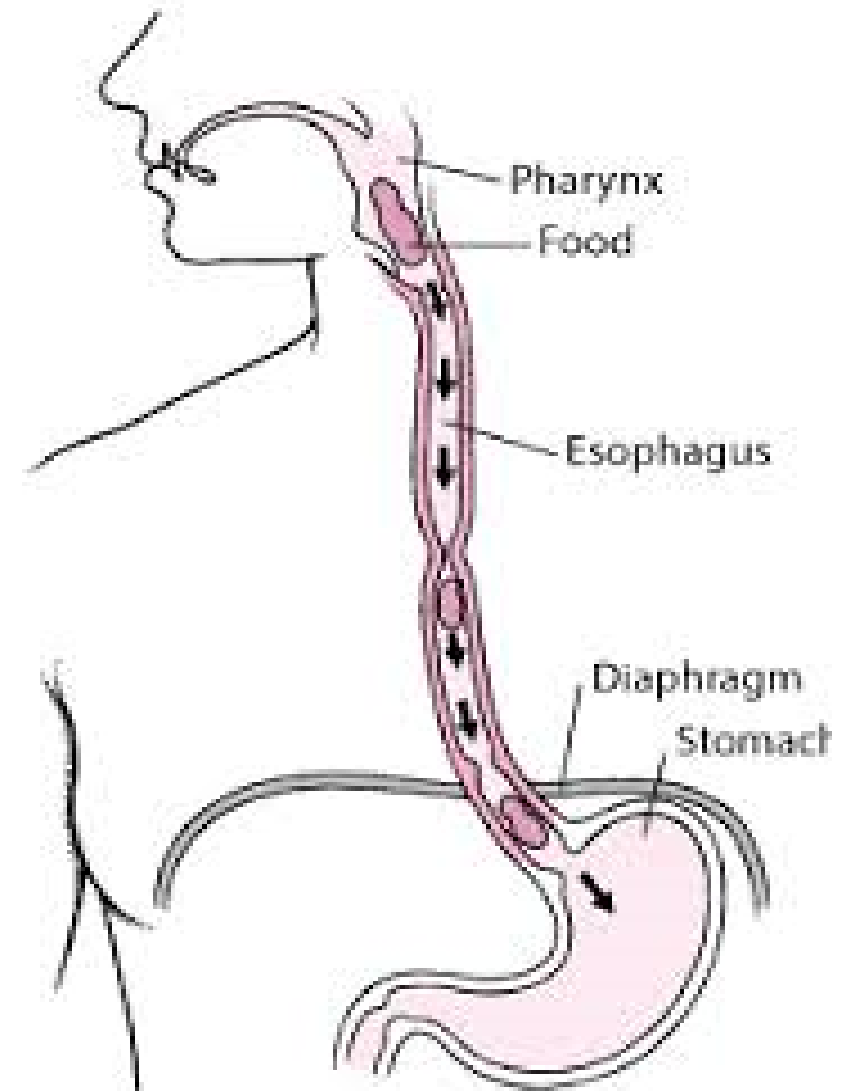
## **GERD – What is it?**

- GERD occurs when stomach acid repeatedly flows back into the esophagus.
- This backwash can irritate the lining of the esophagus and cause discomfort.

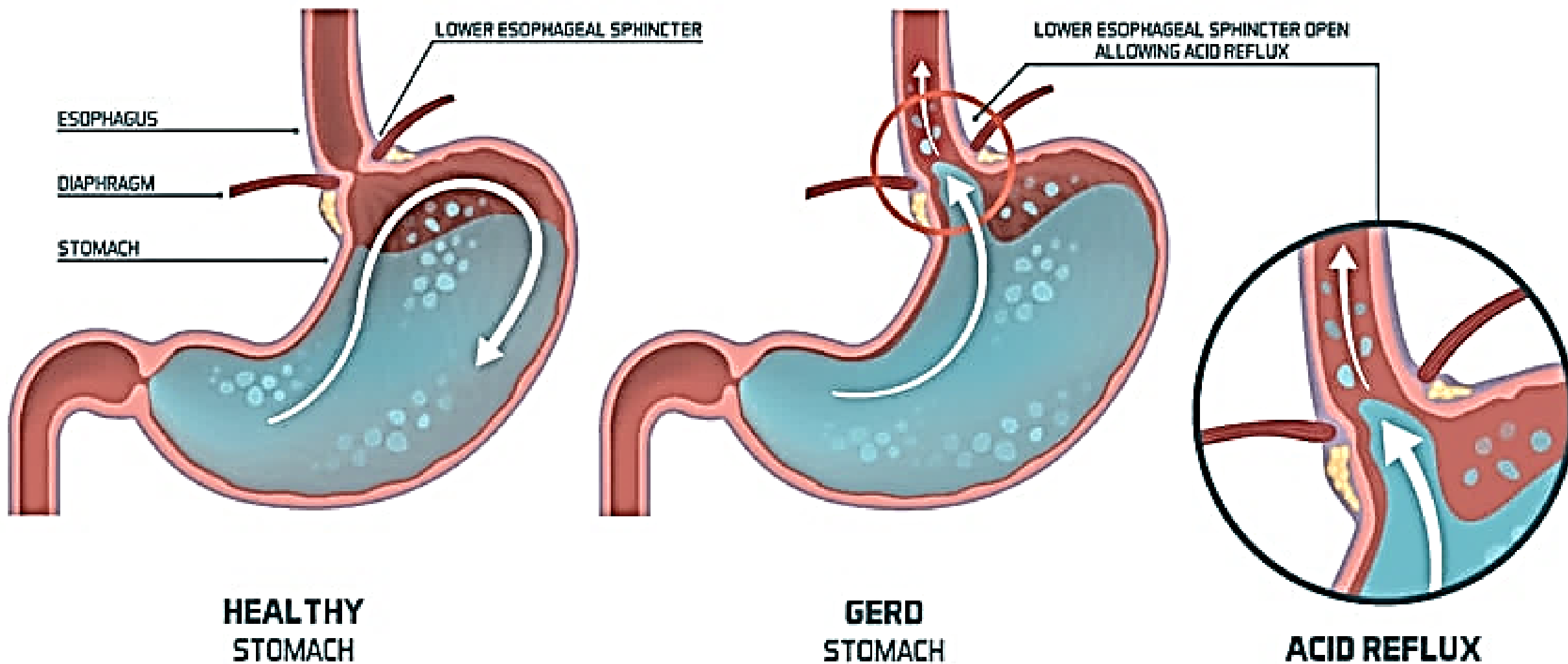
# GERD - Mechanism

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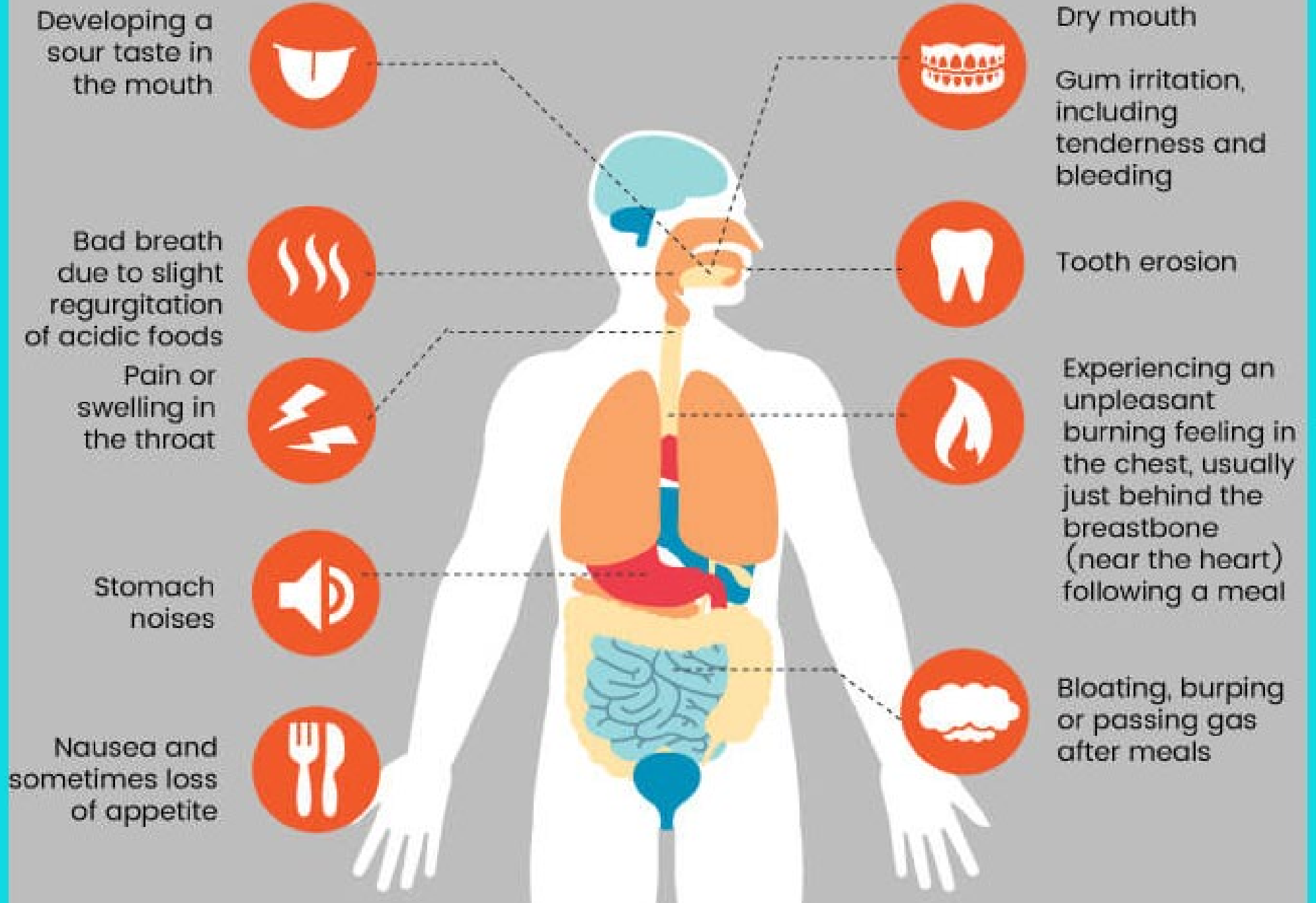
- Food goes from the mouth to the stomach through the esophagus
- The LES (lower esophageal sphincter) is a ring of muscle at the end of the esophagus
- During swallowing, it relaxes to allow food to pass into the stomach
- If it relaxes inappropriately, it can allow stomach contents to back up into the esophagus



# GERD:



# Symptoms of GERD



# Complications

- + Ulcers in the esophagus which may bleed
- o Precancerous lesions (Barrett's Esophagus)
- Narrowing of the esophagus due to scarring
- Aspiration pneumonia and permanent lung damage
- Dental problems from erosion of enamel by stomach acid

**Identifying GERD in Individuals with IDD - the following signs and symptoms are often seen:**

PICA and hand mouthing - to increase saliva which will help to dilute acid and wash the acid back down

Agitation within 30 to 60 minutes of eating a meal – due to reflux causing pain in the esophagus

Agitation in the middle of the night – due to reflux after lying down

Meal refusals – due to trying to avoid episodes of heartburn

Coughing and hoarseness – due to aspiration of refluxed stomach contents



# Treatment and Interventions



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# Lifestyle Changes

## Weight Loss

- Excess weight puts pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter (LES)
- The LES will then more easily open to allow stomach contents to flow up into the esophagus

## Raising the head of the bed

- If the head of the bed is raised, gravity will help prevent reflux

## Smoking cessation

- Smoking relaxes the LES and also dries the mouth so there is little saliva to help neutralize the acid



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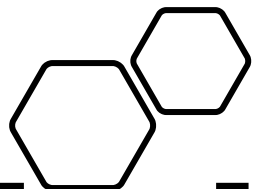
# Lifestyle Changes:

## Avoid certain foods



- Foods that relax the LES: caffeine, any caffeinated beverage, chocolate, alcohol, peppermint, onions, garlic, fatty foods, spicy foods, and fried foods
- Carbonated beverages cause bloating which puts pressure on the LES
- Citrus fruit and juices, tomatoes and tomato products are highly acidic and associated with reflux symptoms





# More Lifestyle Changes

## Avoid large and late meals

- Lying down with a full stomach increases reflux
- Avoid eating meals for 3 hours before going to bed



## Avoid tight fitting clothing

- Tight clothing puts pressure on the abdomen, forcing the stomach contents into the esophagus



# Treatment - Medications

Antacids: neutralize acid for short term relief of symptoms  
Examples: Tums®, Maalox®, Mylanta®

Surface agents: Sucralfate (Carafate®) adheres to the surface of esophagus/stomach, promotes healing, and offers protection.

Histamine 2 receptor antagonists (H2 blockers): decrease acid production but have a slow onset of action. Example: Pepcid®

Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs): stronger and more effective than H2 blockers. Examples: omeprazole (Prilosec®), pantoprazole