What is Heartburn?

Heartburn is the irritation of the esophagus caused by stomach acid. There is a valve connecting the esophagus to the stomach. Normally, this remains closed, preventing stomach acid from escaping. However, certain foods, drugs, and medical conditions can relax this valve, causing it to open. When this happens, stomach acid enters the esophagus causing a burning sensation known as heartburn.

How Can I Prevent Heartburn?

1. Avoid trigger foods, such as spicy and greasy foods, soda, coffee, and alcohol.
2. Eat meals at least 2 to 3 hours before lying down.
3. Raise the head of your bed using 6 inch blocks under the bedposts.
4. Reduce as much stress as possible.
5. Quit Smoking.
6. Lose weight to reduce the pressure on your stomach.

Over The Counter Treatment Options: Ask your doctor or pharmacist which treatment option is right for you

- Antacids: Neutralize the acid in your stomach providing quick relief.
  - Tums, Rolaid, Gaviscon, Mylanta, Maalox
- \( \text{H}_2 \) Receptor Blockers: Prevent the stomach from secreting acid. They do not work as quickly as antacids, but provide long lasting relief for up to 12 hours.
  - Zantac and Pepcid
- Proton Pump Inhibitors: Similar to \( \text{H}_2 \) receptor blockers, these also prevent the stomach from secreting acid. However, they are more potent and effects can be seen for days when taken properly.
  - Prilosec, Nexium, Prevacid

When is it time to see my doctor?

- If you have been using over the counter medications for more than 2 weeks and still experience heartburn symptoms.
- If you have difficulty swallowing.
- If you have stomach pain.
- If you experience diarrhea or constipation.