

Heartburn Treatment Clinic

Mission Statement

The Heartburn Treatment Clinic (HTC) at OhioHealth Mansfield is comprised of a team of specialty trained staff committed to a patient-centered approach to evaluation and treating diseases of the esophagus including Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and hiatal hernias. Our objective is to ensure that each patient has a comprehensive understanding of their disease including the diagnostic process and all treatment options.

We offer world class state-of-the-art diagnostic testing to evaluate the function of the esophagus, measure the acid level in the esophagus, and evaluate for pre-cancerous changes in the esophagus referred to as Barrett's esophagus. Our goal is to work with you (and your primary care physician) to develop a personalized treatment plan specific to your diagnosis, personal needs and wishes. All treatment options are reviewed in detail including medical management strategies for symptom control and minimally invasive surgical treatment options for cure.

The HTC medical director is involved in national clinical trials and is continually evaluating and incorporating new therapies and technologies in order to remain on the cutting edge of the management for esophageal disease.

Our specially trained Nurse Coordinator will oversee your journey through the Heartburn Treatment Clinic. She will be your single point of contact providing education, access and support.

GERD

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), also referred to as "reflux", is a chronic disease of the digestive track in which stomach acid and bile inappropriately flow backward into the esophagus. The esophagus does not tolerate exposure to gastric contents. Chronic exposure can result in many different symptoms and can damage the esophagus. Chronic long-term GERD can negatively impact an individual's quality of life.

Normally, GERD is prevented by the lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The LES is a circular muscle at the bottom of the esophagus which essentially functions as a one way valve that prevents backward flow of stomach contents into the esophagus. GERD occurs when the LES fails to function correctly. GERD symptoms may include:

- Heartburn
- Regurgitation
- Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing)
- Bloating
- Excessive belching
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Chronic cough
- Chronic bronchitis
- Recurrent pneumonia
- Ear pain
- Post nasal drip
- Chronic sore throat
- Chronic hoarseness
- Tooth decay/gingivitis/bad breath
- Globus (feeling like something is caught in your throat)

Ineffective treatment of chronic GERD can result in damage to the esophagus and potentially increase the risk of Barrett's esophagus and esophageal cancer. It is estimated that 50-60 million people in the USA have meaningful reflux symptoms on a monthly basis. Approximately 20-25 million adults in the USA experience daily reflux symptoms. Approximately 38 percent of patients on acid suppression medical therapy indicate that they do not have adequate control of their GERD symptoms. The Heartburn Treatment Clinic provides patients with a comprehensive evaluation and personalized treatment plan based on the patient's needs.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

ENDOSCOPY (EGD)

Upper endoscopy, also known as EGD, is a procedure performed by one of the HTC specialist where a small scope with a high definition camera and light on the end is used to look inside the esophagus, stomach, and duodenum (the first part of the small intestine). EGD enables the HTC specialist to evaluate the lining of the upper gastrointestinal track and take biopsies to assess for abnormal pathology in the esophagus and stomach including premalignant changes in the esophagus. The patient has moderate sedation during the EGD which provides relaxation and allows the patient to rest comfortably during the procedure.

BRAVO pH STUDY

The study involves placing a small pH capsule into the esophagus during the EGD. The capsule is disposable and will fall off on its own within a few days. The pH capsule will measure acid levels in the esophagus over a 48 hour period and communicate the data wirelessly to the Bravo pH recorder. The recorder can be worn on a belt or waistband. It can also be worn around the neck using the accompanying lanyard. The recorder is returned to the endoscopy department after the 48 hour study period so that the data can be downloaded and analyzed.

HIGH RESOLUTION ESOPHAGEAL MANOMETRY WITH IMPEDANCE

This test is performed to evaluate the function of the esophagus and LES, and can help characterize a hiatal hernia when present. The test takes approximately 20 minutes and is performed by the clinical nurse coordinator for the HTC. The test is typically performed on the same day as the EGD and Bravo pH study.

TREATMENT

MEDICAL THERAPY

Medical therapy typically includes some combination of acid suppression medications, lifestyle adjustments, and dietary restrictions. Medical therapy does not cure GERD. The goal of medical therapy is "adequate" symptom control. The risk of potentially serious side effects must be carefully weighed against the potential benefits when considering long term use of some acid suppression medications.

MINIMALLY INVASIVE SURGERY

When medical therapy isn't the best option, minimally invasive surgery can be performed. The goal of surgical treatment is cure of GERD. The cause of GERD is failure of the LES. Any surgical treatment for cure must involve augmentation of the LES and repair of the diaphragm when there is an accompanying hiatal hernia. There are two minimally invasive surgical techniques which have been shown in clinical trials to effectively provide long term cure for GERD. At OhioHealth Mansfield Heartburn Treatment Clinic, Laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication and LINX® sphincter augmentation can be considered for patients who choose surgical treatment of their disease.