



HEALTH AWARENESS

Chronic Heartburn May Signal Serious Disease

(NAPSA)—If you turn to antacids for dessert after each meal, you may have a more serious condition than just heartburn. GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease) is a chronic condition that currently affects more than 21 million Americans. Unfortunately, many people who suffer from GERD do not know they have it, or mistake it for common heartburn.

GERD occurs when there is an abnormal reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus because the muscle between the two does not close properly. Common symptoms of GERD include:

- Chronic or persistent heartburn (burning discomfort that begins behind the breastbone), and
- Acid indigestion/regurgitation (bitter, sour tasting fluid).

Other symptoms may include frequent belching, difficulty swallowing, chronic irritation in the throat, sore gums, hoarseness in the morning, or bad breath.

Many sufferers of chronic heartburn rely on over-the-counter medications such as antacids for relief of symptoms. The problem with self-treatment is that it may actually “cover up” GERD, delaying diagnosis by a physician and



necessary treatment. Untreated GERD may lead to more serious health problems.

If you experience heartburn or acid indigestion two or more times per week, find that antacids only provide temporary relief, or have other related symptoms, you may have GERD. See your healthcare provider for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

For more information contact IFFGD, the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders, by visiting www.iffgd.org, www.aboutGERD.org, or by calling 1-888-964-2001.

