



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Holiday Heartburn or GERD?

(NAPSA)—It seems to happen every year...you eat just a bit too much of the turkey, enjoy that extra piece of pumpkin pie, or indulge in a second portion of yams. Hours later, the heartburn sets in.

As you reach for your usual over-the-counter remedy, however, the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) wants you to take stock of your symptoms. Chronic heartburn can often be a symptom of something far more serious—GERD.

Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD, affects an estimated five to seven percent or more of the global population—men, women, and children. GERD occurs when acidic contents flow back into the esophagus from the stomach causing reflux. Although common, GERD often is unrecognized—its symptoms misunderstood. This is unfortunate because GERD is generally a treatable disease. Serious complications can result if it is not treated properly.

All too often, GERD is either self-treated or mistreated. That's why Thanksgiving week (November 24-30) marks the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorder's Annual GERD Awareness Week.

"GERD is a chronic disease. IFFGD continues to work hard to get the message out that it is treatable and can be controlled. But that can only happen if we spread the word on what this disease is and how to recognize the symptoms," said IFFGD President Nancy Norton.

Simple heartburn is common. But heartburn that occurs more frequently than once a week, becomes more severe at night or wakes a person from sleep, may be a sign of a more serious condition, like GERD, and consultation with a physician is advised. Even



**Holiday time or any time, it's wise to be aware of the dangers of GERD.**

occasional heartburn—if it has occurred for a period of five years or more, or is associated with difficulty in swallowing—may signal a more serious condition.

According to IFFGD, only a physician can make a diagnosis and provide treatment for GERD. Over-the-counter preparations provide only temporary symptom relief. They do not prevent recurrence of symptoms or allow an injured esophagus to heal.

"This disease is often manageable once a patient realizes the need to get medical treatment and understands the difference between heartburn and GERD symptoms," Norton added. "Effective treatment for GERD will bring the symptoms under control so that you can feel better and can carry on a normal life."

A physician's care for GERD will also heal the esophagus of inflammation or injury and will manage or prevent serious medical complications. Treatment options include lifestyle modifications, medications, surgery, or a combination of methods.

For more information, visit [www.IFFGD.org](http://www.IFFGD.org) or call IFFGD at 1-888-964-2001.