Gastroesophageal Reflux (GERD) Diet

General Characteristics of GERD:

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (or GERD) is a very common disorder that occurs when stomach acid refluxes into the lower esophagus through the lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The LES is a bank of muscles that act as a protective barrier against reflux material by contracting and relaxing. If this barrier is relaxed at inappropriate times or otherwise compromised, reflux occurs. Chronic or reoccurring reflux allows prolonged contact of stomach contents with the lower esophagus, leading to the symptoms of GERD. In general, four underlying conditions are associated with GERD:

1. Decreased lower esophageal sphincter pressure
2. Irritation of the lining of the esophagus by the stomach contents
3. Abnormal clearance of esophageal acid
4. Delayed stomach emptying

Symptoms Associated with GERD:

GERD is characterized by symptoms and/or tissue damage that result from repeated or prolonged exposure of the lining of the esophagus to the acidic contents of the stomach. The primary symptom of GERD is persistent heartburn; a burning discomfort felt in the upper chest or abdomen. Symptoms of GERD vary from person to person and at times there may be no symptoms at all. The majority of people with GERD have mild symptoms with no visible evidence of tissue damage and little risk of developing complications.

Tips to Control Heartburn:

- Avoid foods and beverages that irritate the esophagus lining, including: fried and fatty foods, peppermint, chocolate, alcohol, coffee, citrus fruit and juices, and tomato products. (Recommended foods listed below).
- Maintain an upright posture during and after eating.
- Eat 5-6 small meals instead of 3 large meals.
- Avoid clothing that is tight in the abdominal area.
- Lose weight if overweight. (Sample meal plan listed below).
- Stop smoking.
- Elevate the head of the bed 6 inches.
- Avoid lying down 2-3 hours after eating.
- See a dietician to help devise an individual meal plan.
- Chew non-mint gum which will increase saliva production and decrease acid in the esophagus.
**Recommended Foods for GERD**

This diet is indicated for people who have gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or its complications, such as esophageal ulcers, esophagitis, and peptic esophageal strictures, and is useful for those who experience heartburn, a common symptom of GERD.

**Recommended Foods:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverages:</th>
<th>Foods That May Cause Distress:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skim-1%-2% low fat milk, buttermilk, juices (except citrus), decaffeinated non-mint herbal teas</td>
<td>Whole milk, chocolate milk, citrus juices, carbonated beverages, tomato juice, mint tea, coffee (regular/decaf), alcohol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breads and Cereals:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plain breads, cereals, rolls, bagels, low fat crackers, low fat muffins</td>
<td>Croissants, doughnuts, sweet rolls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desserts:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel food cake, sponge cake, low fat cookies, gelatin (Jell-O), sherbet, fruit ice, low fat yogurt or ice cream</td>
<td>Pies, cookies, cakes, ice cream, any desserts containing chocolate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fats:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced-calorie/low fat dressings, mayonnaise, margarine, small amounts of vegetable oil</td>
<td>Gravies, heavy cream, meat drippings, butter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruits:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh/frozen/canned fruits as tolerated</td>
<td>Orange, lemon, tangerine, pineapple, grapefruit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat and Meat Substitutes:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lean mean, poultry (without skin), fish (fresh or packed in water), shellfish, low fat yogurt, low fat cheese, tofu, dried beans and peas, eggs</td>
<td>Fried meat/poultry/fish/eggs, regular lunch meat, hot dogs, sausages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potatoes and Starches:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baked/boiled/mashed with low fat milk, pasta, rice</td>
<td>French fries, potato chips, pasta with cream sauce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soups:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat free broths, homemade soups, cream soup made with low fat milk</td>
<td>Regular cream soups and tomato-based soups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Vegetables:**
Plain/fresh/frozen/canned

**Spices:**
Salt, vinegar, garlic, oregano, sage, pepper

Fried or creamy-style vegetables, tomato products
Cajun spices, spearmint, peppermint, chili, jalapeno peppers

### Sample Meal Plan for GERD

**Breakfast:**
- Apple juice (1/2 cup)
- Whole grain cereal (1 cup)
- Banana
- Skim milk (1 cup)

**Morning Snack:**
- Graham crackers (4)
- Low fat yogurt (1)

**Lunch:**
- Vegetable Soup (1 cup)
- Saltine crackers (4)
- Whole wheat bread (2 slices)
- Turkey (3 slices)
- Low fat cheese (1 slice)
- Lettuce and tomato
- Mayonnaise (1 Tbsp)
- Apple (1)
- Iced Tea

**Afternoon Snack:**
- Pretzels (1 ounce)
- Peach (1)

**Dinner:**
- Green salad (2 cups)
- Reduced-calorie dressing (2 Tbsp)
- Baked/grilled skinless chicken breast (4 oz)
- Rice
- Dinner roll (1 small)
- Margarine (1 Tsp)
- Broccoli (1/2 cup)
- Apple juice (1 cup)