



Reflux Disorders in Seniors

If a senior loved one is complaining of heartburn, pain when swallowing, or regurgitation, they could be experiencing gastroesophageal reflux disorder (GERD). While many older adults can have minor heartburn or indigestion from time to time, GERD is more serious, persistent, and affects millions of people. However, with proper treatment and management, symptoms of GERD can be reduced.

What is GERD?

GERD is a chronic condition that causes the contents of the stomach to flow back up the digestive tract and into the esophagus. When this occurs, the stomach contents can harm the lining of the esophagus and produce an uncomfortable burning sensation in the chest area.

Who is at Risk for GERD?

GERD can affect anyone, but seniors, in general, are at a higher risk due to changes in the body from aging. Risks can increase through the following conditions:

- Asthma
- Delayed stomach emptying
- Common medications, such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and antidepressants
- Diabetes
- Hiatal hernias
- Obesity
- Peptic ulcers

How to Tell if a Senior Has GERD

Some older adults may not be aware they have GERD. Over time, acid damage and age can lead to reduced sensation. The feeling of chest pain or heartburn may fade even though the condition worsens. However, if you know what to look out for, the signs are easy to spot.

Symptoms of GERD may include:

- Sour or bitter taste in the mouth
- Burning sensation in the chest (heartburn), usually after eating, which might be worse at night
- Food or liquid “coming back up” (regurgitating)
- Food getting stuck when swallowing
- Feeling a lump in the throat
- Poor or disrupted sleep
- Chronic cough
- Laryngitis
- New or worsening asthma

How is GERD Treated?

Over-the-counter (OTC) medication and lifestyle changes are usually the first lines of treatment. If OTC or prescribed medications are unsuccessful, advanced diagnostic tests may be needed. For severe cases, a doctor may recommend a surgical or medical procedure.

If left untreated, GERD can lead to more serious health issues and complications, such as the following:

- Esophageal Stricture
- Esophageal Ulcer
- Barrett's Esophagus

Visiting Angels Provides Supportive Care

If older adults are having trouble managing symptoms on their own, a Visiting Angels senior care provider can provide in-home assistance to help manage. Call **800.365.4189** today for more information.



In-Home Personal Care Can Complement Home Health Care

“Home health care” and “in-home personal care” may sound similar, but they are actually two distinct services. Understanding these services — and how they can be used together — can help you develop an effective home care plan that surrounds your aging loved one with supportive, compassionate senior care.

What is Home Health Care?

Many older adults who are living with a chronic or acute health condition receive home health services, including:

- Health Monitoring Services
- Wound Care
- Injections
- Intravenous (IV) or Medication Therapy
- Rehabilitation

These medical services are delivered at a patient’s residence by a skilled medical provider, such as a registered nurse (RN); a licensed practical nurse (LPN); licensed home health aide who is under the supervision of an RN; or a physical, occupational, or speech therapist.

Home health care may be paid for by Medicare or another insurance company and is ordered and directed by a physician. Some insurance plans may have eligibility limits that restrict the number of covered home health visits per year.

The frequency and duration of visits are decided by the physician based on the patient’s needs, but home health care visits are generally short-term and intermittent. Visits intend to accomplish a specific task for as long as the patient is ill or recovering.

What is In-Home Personal Care?

In-home personal care provided by Visiting Angels includes non-medical services delivered by professional, experienced personal caregivers. Instead of being directed by a physician,

services are directed—and often paid for—by the older adult and their family. This enables the family to determine how often and for how many hours they want a personal caregiver to be present in the home.

Although personal caregivers are not licensed to provide medical care, they can assist with an older adult’s everyday needs, including:

- Companionship & Socialization
- Errands & Shopping
- Light housekeeping
- Meal Preparation
- Medication reminders
- Bathing & Dressing Assistance
- Toileting Assistance

How Can In-Home Personal Care Combine With Home Health Care?

Although in-home personal care and home health care address unique needs, they can be combined to provide a full spectrum of senior care.

Personal caregivers can work longer hours and assist a senior when home health care providers cannot. They can also remind older adults of home health appointments, assist with medication reminders, and serve as the “eyes and ears” for the family and home health providers. In fact, Visiting Angels has developed a coordination-of-care tool to foster collaboration between staff members and home health case managers.

After an older adult recovers, many families continue to use in-home personal care services to provide consistency for their senior and peace of mind for them.

In-Home Personal Care Can Make an Impact

Whether your older adult is living with an illness or injury or is relatively healthy, an in-home personal caregiver can make a real difference in your senior’s life.

To learn more about how a Visiting Angels caregiver can assist with your senior’s care, schedule a no-cost, no-obligation in-home assessment with your local home care agency. Call **800.365.4189** today for more information.