ACID REFLUX and GERD

Acid Reflux occurs when the muscles of the lower esophagus relax and allow stomach acids to flow upwards into the esophagus, and even the mouth. These stomach acids can cause irritation and inflammation of the esophagus while negatively impacting your oral health.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) is the chronic, more severe form of acid reflux that requires treatment to avoid additional health complications. Children and adults that have frequent heartburn two or more times per week and suffer from other related symptoms may be diagnosed with GERD.

MEDICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:
- Heartburn – A burning sensation in the chest
- Regurgitation of food or sour liquid
- Belching, nausea, and vomiting
- Hoarseness, throat-clearing, sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Stomach ache and pain on awakening
- Chronic coughing, wheezing, and chest pain
- Sinus infections and post-nasal drip
- Asthma and COPD
- Snoring and sleep apnea

DENTAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:
- Burning sensation in the mouth and/or bad breath.
- Erosion of tooth enamel which leads to increased wear and decay.
- Tooth chipping, sensitivity, and discoloration

“SILENT” REFLUX:
- The complete absence of the awareness of signs and symptoms is relatively common.
- Affects over 50 million Americans and is often overlooked and misdiagnosed.
- Most people have several different symptoms at the same time, but heartburn may not be one of them.
- The observation of tooth erosion by a dentist may be the first indication of the possibility of acid reflux.

TREATMENTS and LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS:
- Avoid foods such as chocolate, spicy/greasy foods, citrus foods, and tomato-based foods.
- Refrain from eating several hours before bed, or lying down 2 to 3 hours after eating.
- Lose weight if you are overweight or obese. Avoid tight clothing.
- Avoid beverages such as alcohol, coffee, and carbonated soft drinks.
- Quit smoking.

PROTECTING YOUR ORAL HEALTH:
- Visit your dentist regularly for evaluation of your tooth enamel.
- Use sensitivity toothpaste such as Sensodyne Pronamel or Colgate Sensitive.
- Rinse your mouth with water following acid reflux episodes.
- Do not brush your teeth for 60 minutes after consuming acidic foods or drinks.
- Receive fluoride treatments from your dentist to strengthen your teeth.
- Wear a dentist-prescribed mouthguard at night to prevent acid from damaging your teeth.
- Avoid over-the-counter antacids (that have a high sugar content), especially at night.

*** If you often suffer from heartburn or acid indigestion, make an appointment with your physician for evaluation. GERD is sometimes diagnosed by symptoms, but your physician may want to perform testing such as: Upper Gastrointestinal (GI) Series of X-rays, Endoscopy, pH Monitoring, or Manometry.