

# Advanced Diagnosis, Long-Term Treatment for Acid Reflux

**H**earthburn is one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders, affecting about 60 million people at least once a month and as many as 15 million once a day. When it's frequent, it may be gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. Symptoms range from a burning sensation in the middle of the chest to stomach pain, persistent cough and even vomiting. Fortunately, VHC Health's [Heartburn Center](#) can provide relief.

## **G. Kevin Gillian, MD, FACS,**

Director, Heartburn Center, has 25 years of experience in state-of-the-art evaluation and surgical care of patients with GERD, and has performed about 5,000 anti-reflux procedures. A decade ago, Dr. Gillian pioneered the LINX™ Reflux Management System in the Washington, DC metro area. In 2022, he performed it more than any other physician in the world.

Here, he explains what GERD is and how the Heartburn Center can treat it.

## WHAT CAUSES GERD?

**Dr. Gillian:** When fluid from your stomach moves backward into your esophagus, throat and lungs, pain and other problems occur. Acid reflux, GERD, heartburn, indigestion and esophageal spasms are all terms associated with the issue.

## DO PEOPLE WITH GERD PRODUCE MORE STOMACH ACID?

**Dr. Gillian:** No. Many people think GERD is due to excess acid because when they take acid-reducing medications, their symptoms improve. In actuality, GERD is often caused by an anatomic problem that causes the valve between the stomach and esophagus to leak. The most common example is a hiatal hernia, which allows the upper stomach to slide through the diaphragm and into the chest, impeding the valve's function.

## WHAT CAN HELP?

**Dr. Gillian:** Reducing stomach acid with over-the-counter medications such as Nexium and Prevacid may help people feel better, but that doesn't stop reflux. When they stop taking those medications, their valve is still not working, reflux happens, and symptoms like regurgitation can return. In short, acid belongs in the stomach; it helps digest food and protects us from infections. But the only way to keep it there is to repair the valve between the stomach and esophagus.

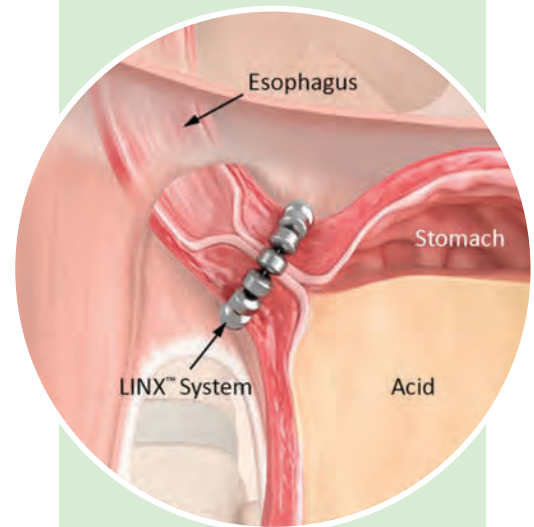
## HOW EFFECTIVE IS SURGERY?

**Dr. Gillian:** Several procedures can provide long-term treatment for GERD. One of the most effective is LINX®, a short, minimally invasive, same-day procedure. LINX is a small, flexible ring of magnets placed around the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) above the stomach opening. It helps the valve stay closed when it is supposed to be closed, preventing acid from going backward. When you swallow, the esophagus pushes the magnets apart to allow food or liquid to go through and then they close again. This also reduces excess gas and stomach bloating.

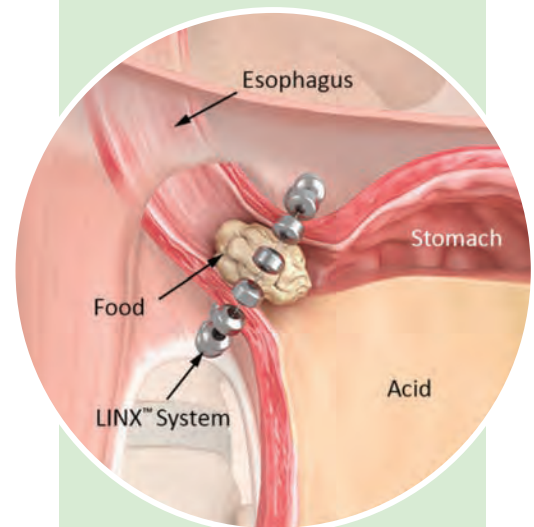
## HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT TREATMENT IS BEST?

**Dr. Gillian:** At the Heartburn Center, we evaluate whether patients with GERD are candidates for surgical intervention or medical management by studying how their esophagus and valve are functioning. We do this through esophageal function testing, a state-of-the-art diagnostic tool that assesses esophageal movement, and through pH impedance testing, which shows how much reflux patients experience in a 24-hour period. Both tests help us determine the most appropriate treatment.

## HOW LINX WORKS



LINX is a flexible ring of small magnets placed around the LES during a minimally invasive procedure.



The strength of the magnets helps keep the weak LES closed to prevent reflux. When patients swallow, LINX opens temporarily to allow food and liquid to pass into the stomach.

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