

## BARRETT'S ESOPHAGUS

Barrett's esophagus is a pre-cancerous condition in which the surface of the lower esophagus changes in color and composition because of repeated exposure to stomach contents. The cells lining the lower esophagus become similar to those lining the small intestine. These changes are believed to be the major risk factor for the development of esophageal cancer.

Esophageal cancer is a rare but deadly cancer and the number of cases continues to rise. Fortunately, only a small number of people with Barrett's esophagus may develop esophageal cancer. Barrett's esophagus can be diagnosed with endoscopy and biopsy.



Barrett's esophagus is more common in people who suffer from frequent, persistent or longstanding heartburn or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Other risk factors for Barrett's esophagus include age (50 and over), male gender, and Caucasian ethnicity. Evaluating those at risk for Barrett's esophagus may allow for earlier detection of these changes,

and of dysplasia which refers to changes in the cells and tissue structure of the esophageal mucosal lining and is considered the best indicator of the risk of esophageal cancer.

Patients with Barrett's esophagus are treated with acid reducing medications, to prevent further injury to the esophagus, and are surveyed at intervals with endoscopy and biopsy to ensure that there are no concerning changes. If you have frequent, persistent or longstanding heartburn symptoms, you need to consider seeing a Gastroenterologist for further evaluation.