



ATLANTIC GASTROENTEROLOGY ASSOCIATES, P.A.

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**When It's More Than Heartburn**  
***Warning Signs of Esophageal Cancer and What You Can Do***  
**April is Esophageal Cancer Month**

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP, N.J. – Sometimes heartburn isn't just heartburn. It can be a warning sign. It could be your diet. But it also could be the early warning signs of esophageal cancer.

Last year, 16,640 new cases of esophageal cancer were diagnosed in the U.S., according to the National Cancer Institute. Of those, 14,500 people died of the disease. This staggering statistic is because most cases aren't detected until the disease is in the late stages.

If esophageal cancer is detected in the early stages, its cure rate can be as high as 98 percent.

"Unfortunately, most people are unaware that acid reflux predisposes them to esophageal cancer," said Barry Kaufman, M.D., F.A.C.G., C.N.S.P., of Atlantic Gastroenterology Associates. "The majority of cases are found in patients with a history of acid reflux, also known as Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). Other risk factors include smoking and alcohol consumption." According to The American College of Gastroenterology (ACG), people who experience weekly heartburn or acid regurgitation are 64 times more likely to get esophageal cancer than people who have never experienced these symptoms.

Patients with Barrett's Esophagus, which occurs in 10 percent of patients with acid reflux, are at particularly greater risk. The ACG notes that those patients have a one in 200 chance of developing esophageal cancer compared to one in 500 among the general population. However, with new ablative procedures that can remove diseased cells, 95-98 percent of Barrett's Esophagus can be cured, virtually eliminating the risk of developing esophageal cancer.

"Early detection of this cancer is so important," said Dr. Kaufman. "We're able to effectively treat precancerous and early stages of the disease, but as it progresses, our options and success rate both decrease."

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## 2/Esophageal Cancer

### **Are you at risk?**

Studies have found the following risk factors for esophageal cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute:

- Age 65 or older
- Male
- Smoking
- Heavy drinking
- Obesity
- Acid Reflux
- Barrett's Esophagus

Having any of these risk factors does not mean that esophageal cancer will develop. But these risk factors may increase the likelihood that a patient may contract the disease. If you have any of these symptoms, please contact your physician.

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### **About Atlantic Gastroenterology Associates**

Atlantic Gastroenterology Associates (AGA) is the largest and most sophisticated gastrointestinal treatment center in the southern New Jersey region. Established in 1978, AGA is now a leader in the rapidly advancing field of digestive disease diagnosis and treatment.

- Hepatitis Treatment Center
- Celiac Diagnostic Center
- Crohn's and Colitis Treatment Center
- Clinical Research Associates