



News Release

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GERD AWARENESS WEEK AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR GASTROINTESTINAL ENDOSCOPY IDENTIFIES BARRETT'S ESOPHAGUS AS A MAJOR HEALTH ISSUE

*Professional Society Urges Certain Patients with Chronic GERD to
Seek Screening for Barrett's Esophagus*

Oak Brook, Illinois—November 21, 2005— While millions of Americans enjoy turkey, stuffing and pie on Thanksgiving Day, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), the premier specialty society for endoscopists, urges people who suffer from chronic gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) to visit their health care provider to discuss whether they should be referred to a gastroenterologist (stomach specialist) for screening for Barrett's esophagus. Often caused by chronic GERD, Barrett's esophagus is a major health issue affecting more than two million Americans. Few who are at risk for the disease see a specialist for evaluation.

The week of **November 20-26** is **GERD Awareness Week**. GERD occurs when the contents of the stomach regurgitate into the esophagus causing a burning sensation in the chest or throat. Half of U.S. adults experience symptoms of GERD almost monthly while 20 percent experience symptoms weekly. People who have chronic GERD are at risk for the development of Barrett's esophagus, which is a precancerous condition affecting the lining of the esophagus that can only be diagnosed by endoscopy (a procedure by which the esophagus can be seen with the use of a tube-like instrument). Barrett's esophagus is a precursor to esophageal adenocarcinoma, which has been and remains one of the most rapidly rising cancers in the U.S.

The ASGE urges people who experience chronic heartburn to be evaluated by a gastroenterologist to see if additional care is needed. Gastrointestinal endoscopists are physicians who specialize in the treatment of diseases of the esophagus, stomach and small bowel. They are specially trained to treat GERD and recognize Barrett's esophagus. Patients can locate an ASGE-member physician in their area by visiting www.askasge.org

“Our members are concerned about the rapidly rising rate of esophageal adenocarcinoma in the United States,” said Dr. Robert H. Hawes, ASGE president and professor of medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina. “We know that Barrett's is a precursor to this dangerous and aggressive form of cancer. We recommend that at-risk patients seek evaluation for Barrett's esophagus from a specialist trained to correctly identify the disease.”

About the ASGE

American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), founded in 1941, is the preeminent professional organization dedicated to advancing the practice of Endoscopy. ASGE, with more than 8,500 physician members worldwide, promotes the highest standards for endoscopic training and practice, fosters endoscopic research, recognizes distinguished contributions to Endoscopy, and is the foremost resource for endoscopic education.

For more information, please visit the ASGE Web site at www.askasge.org or call 1-866-305-ASGE.

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