

## Wireless System Tracks Esophageal Reflux

WEDNESDAY, June 20  
(HealthDay News) -- A  
wireless monitoring  
system that uses  
electrical impulses to  
track esophageal reflux  
has been developed by  
U.S. researchers.

The researchers say the  
system may offer an  
easier, more comfortable method of following normal eating, drinking and other  
activities that may play a role in acid reflux. It was developed by doctors at the  
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and engineers at UT  
Arlington.

The new system combines radio frequency identification (RFID) -- used in stores  
to track inventory and in identification chips in pets -- and impedance monitoring,  
which tracks reflux through electrical impulses.

A small, flexible RFID chip about 2 centimeters square (a bit larger than a dime)  
is affixed to the patient's esophagus. The chip tests for electrical impulses that  
signal acidic or nonacidic fluid in the esophagus and transmits that information  
to a wireless sensor worn around the patient's neck.

Details about this system, which is still in the test phase, were presented in late  
May at the Digestive Disease Week conference in Washington, D.C.

Currently, testing for gastroesophageal reflux involves insertion of a flexible  
catheter through the nose and down into the esophagus.

"The procedure is very uncomfortable, and, because of the catheter, you can't  
eat or drink the way you normally would. The test results can be biased,  
because you change the way you eat," Dr. Shou Jiang Tang, assistant professor of  
internal medicine at UT Southwestern, said in a prepared statement.

He was one of the developers of the new monitoring system.

About 19 million people in the United States have gastroesophageal reflux  
disease (GERD), says the American College of Gastroenterology. GERD occurs  
when a muscle at the end of the esophagus doesn't close properly. This allows  
stomach contents, including acid, to move up into esophagus and irritate it.

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