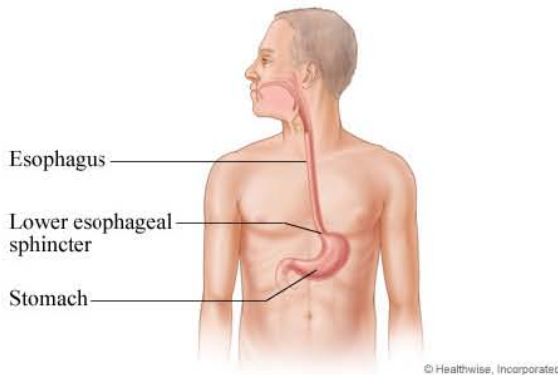


What is Dysphagia?

Difficulty swallowing is also called dysphagia. It is usually a sign of a problem with your throat or esophagus, the muscular tube that moves food and liquids from the back of your mouth to your stomach. Although dysphagia can happen to anyone, it is most common in older adults, premature babies, and people with problems of the brain or nervous system.

There are many different problems that can prevent the throat or esophagus from working properly. Some of these are minor, while others are more serious. If you have a hard time swallowing once or twice, you probably do not have a medical problem. But if you have trouble swallowing on a regular basis, you may have a more serious problem that needs treatment.



What causes dysphagia?

Normally, the muscles in your throat and esophagus squeeze, or contract, to move food and liquids from your mouth to your stomach without problems. Sometimes, though, food and liquids have trouble getting to your stomach. There are two types of problems that can make it hard for food and liquids to travel down your esophagus:

A. The muscles and nerves that help move food through the throat and esophagus are not working right. This can happen if you have:

Had a stroke or a brain or spinal cord injury.

Certain problems with your nervous system, such as achalasia, post-polio syndrome, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or Parkinson's disease.

An immune system problem that causes swelling (or inflammation) and weakness, such as polymyositis or dermatomyositis.

Esophageal spasm. This means that the muscles of the esophagus suddenly squeeze. Sometimes this can prevent food from reaching the stomach.

Scleroderma. In this condition, tissues of the esophagus become hard and narrow.

Scleroderma can also make the lower esophageal muscle weak, which may cause food and stomach acid to come back up into your throat and mouth.

B. Something is blocking your throat or esophagus. This may happen if you have:

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). When stomach acid backs up regularly into your esophagus, it can cause ulcers in the esophagus, which can then cause scars to form. These scars can make your esophagus narrower. People who have GERD for a long time may also develop Barrett's esophagus.

Esophagitis. This is inflammation of the esophagus. This can be caused by different problems, such as GERD or having an infection or getting a pill stuck in the esophagus. It can

also be caused by an allergic reaction to food or things in the air.

Esophageal webs. These occur when thin pieces of tissue stick out from the walls of the esophagus. Some people are born with them, while others develop them later in life.

Diverticula. These are small sacs in the walls of the esophagus or the throat. Some people are born with them, while others develop them later in life.

Esophageal tumors. These growths in the esophagus may be cancerous or not cancerous.

Some type of food or object stuck in your throat or esophagus. Older people with dentures may have problems chewing food properly before they swallow. Young children will sometimes swallow small objects that can get stuck in the esophagus.

Masses outside the esophagus, such as lymph nodes, tumors, or bone spurs on the vertebrae that press on your esophagus.

Sometimes doctors can find no reason for dysphagia, even though it can have many causes. In some people, dysphagia is just a result of aging. As people get older, all of their muscles can get weaker, including the esophagus.

What are the symptoms?

Dysphagia can come and go, be mild or severe, or get worse over time. If you have dysphagia, you may:

Have problems getting food or liquids to go down on the first try.

Gag, choke, or cough when you swallow.

Have food or liquids come back up through your throat, mouth, or nose after you swallow.

Feel like foods or liquids are stuck in some part of your throat or chest.

Have pain when you swallow.

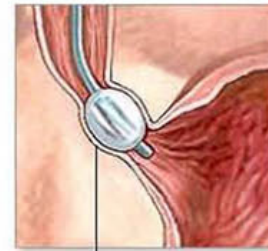
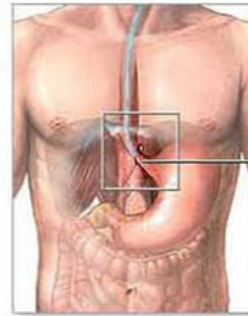
Have pain or pressure in your chest or have heartburn.

Lose weight because you are not getting enough food or liquid.

If you have problems breathing because something is stuck in your throat or chest, call 911 immediately.

If you have had difficulty swallowing for more than 1 week, call your doctor.

Balloon dilation of the lower esophageal sphincter



Lower esophageal sphincter

ADAM.

DYSPHAGIA

To The Patient

Because education is an important part of comprehensive medical care, you have been provided with this information to help you understand your condition. Most endoscopists are highly trained specialists and welcome your questions regarding their credentials and training. If you have question that have not been



801 E. Nolana Ave, Ste 4
McAllen, Texas 78501

Phone: (956) 686-2626

www.texasgidocs.com

Jose Rodriguez, MD, FACP



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