



Esophageal Stricture

The human body is a complex system of interconnected organs and structures, each with a specific role in maintaining our overall health. One such structure is the esophagus, a muscular tube connecting our throat to our stomach, allowing food and liquid to travel down our digestive system. But what happens when this vital passageway becomes narrow and tight? This condition is known as an esophageal stricture.

What is an Esophageal Stricture?

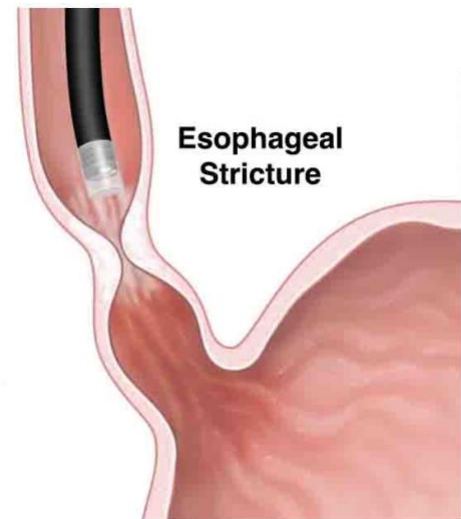
An esophageal stricture is an abnormal narrowing or tightening of the esophagus. This condition makes it more difficult for food and liquid to travel down the tube from the throat to the stomach. The term "benign" is often used to describe this condition, indicating that it's not cancerous.

Symptoms of Esophageal Stricture

An esophageal stricture's primary symptom is dysphagia, a medical term for difficulty swallowing. Moving food or liquid from your mouth to your stomach requires more time and effort. Dysphagia can be painful, and in some cases, swallowing may even become impossible. Occasional difficulty swallowing, such as when you eat too fast or don't chew your food well enough, usually isn't cause for concern. However, if you consistently have trouble swallowing, it may indicate a more severe condition like esophageal stricture. Patients often complain of difficulty swallowing items such as meat, bread, and often clumpy rice.

Causes of Esophageal Stricture

A variety of factors can cause esophageal strictures. One of the most common causes is damage to the esophagus from stomach acid. This can occur in conditions like gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), where stomach acid frequently flows back



into the esophagus. Other causes can include injuries to the esophagus, radiation therapy to the chest, or ingesting corrosive substances.

Diagnosis and Treatment

If you're experiencing trouble swallowing, seeking medical attention is important. This symptom can occur for a variety of reasons. It is always important to rule out malignancy since trouble swallowing is one of the classic warning signs. Fortunately, most esophageal strictures are benign (i.e. not cancerous). Your healthcare provider may use a variety of tests to diagnose this condition, including a barium swallow test, upper endoscopy “scope” test, or esophageal manometry, which measures esophageal muscle strength.

Once diagnosed, treatment for benign esophageal stricture primarily involves addressing the underlying cause and relieving the symptoms. This can include medication to reduce stomach acid if GERD is the cause. In some cases, a procedure known as *esophageal dilation* may be used to widen the esophagus. This is done using a small balloon or a dilating device during an endoscopy under sedation. In severe cases, surgery may be required to correct the stricture. Remember, it's essential to consult with a healthcare provider if you're experiencing any difficulty swallowing. They can diagnose you adequately and guide you through the appropriate treatment options.

Center For Digestive Health & Nutrition

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The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice comprised of experienced Gastroenterologists, Nurse Practitioners, and staff members dedicated to preventing and treating digestive disorders. Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977, having cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems. Our mission is to deliver high-quality gastroenterology services efficiently and cost-consciously. We realize the very sensitive nature of GI illness and understand the necessity to provide our services in an environment that stresses patient privacy and confidentiality and where patient satisfaction is the goal. Appointments can be conveniently scheduled online via our website above. Learn more about digestive issues on Instagram @thedigestivetract

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