

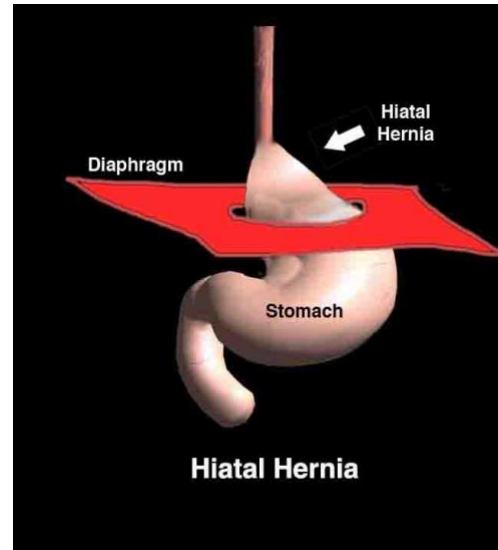
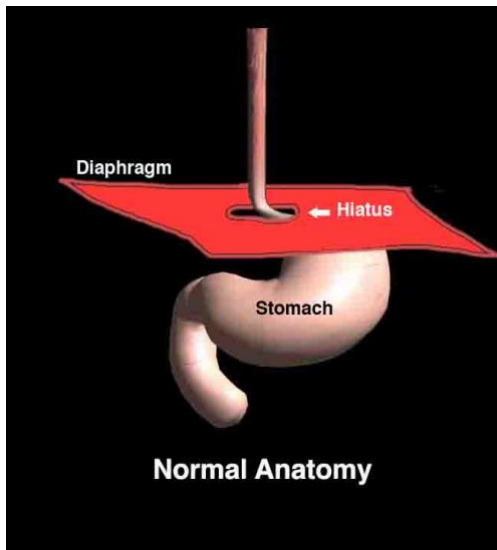


Understanding Hiatal Hernia

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 diaphragm, a large muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdomen, assisting in breathing. But what happens when a part of the stomach pushes through this muscle and into the chest? This condition is known as a hiatal hernia.

What is a Hiatal Hernia?

A hiatal hernia occurs when the upper part of your stomach bulges through the large muscle separating your abdomen and chest, known as the diaphragm. The diaphragm has a small opening called the hiatus, through which your food tube, or esophagus, passes before connecting to your stomach. Normally, your stomach is below the diaphragm, but in cases of a hiatal hernia, a portion of the stomach pushes up - or “herniates” - through the small opening in the diaphragm (the hiatus) and into the chest. Hence, the term “hiatal hernia.”



Symptoms of a Hiatal Hernia

This condition is quite common, and most people with a hiatal hernia do not experience symptoms. However, when symptoms do occur, they may include heartburn, regurgitation of food or liquids into the mouth, difficulty swallowing, and chest or abdominal pain.

Causes of a Hiatal Hernia

The exact cause of most hiatal hernias isn't known. In some people, injury or other damage may weaken muscle tissue, making it possible for the stomach to push through the diaphragm. Additionally, persistent and intense pressure on the surrounding muscles, such as when coughing, vomiting, or straining during a bowel movement, may lead to a hiatal hernia.

Diagnosis and Treatment

If you're experiencing symptoms of a hiatal hernia, your doctor may use a variety of tests to diagnose this condition, including an "upper scope" endoscopy, and barium UGI X-ray. Once diagnosed, the treatment for a hiatal hernia primarily involves relieving symptoms and preventing complications. This can include lifestyle changes, such as dietary modifications and avoiding activities that cause abdominal strain; medication to manage symptoms like heartburn; and, in some cases, surgery. Remember, it's important to consult with your doctor if you're experiencing any symptoms of a hiatal hernia. 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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