

DYSPHAGIA (DIFFICULTY IN SWALLOWING)

DEFINATION - Dysphagia refers to the sensation of food sticking or getting hung up in the base of throat or in the chest after we started to swallow.

What are the causes of Dysphagia?

Esophagus (Food pipe) related:

Achalasia. When the lower esophageal muscle (sphincter) doesn't relax properly to let food enter the stomach, it may lead to bring food back up into the throat. Muscles in the wall of esophagus may be weak as well, a condition that tends to worsen over time.

Esophageal stricture. A narrowed esophagus (stricture) can trap large pieces of food. Tumours or scar tissue, often caused by gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD), can cause narrowing.

Esophageal tumours. These occupies the lumen of food pipe and causes difficulty in swallowing.

Foreign bodies. Sometimes food or another object can partially block the throat or esophagus may lead to perforation some times and is then a emergency situation.

Esophageal ring. A thin area of narrowing in the lower esophagus can intermittently cause difficulty swallowing solid foods.

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Damage to esophageal tissues from stomach acid backing up into the esophagus can lead to spasm or scarring and narrowing of the lower esophagus.

Eosinophilic esophagitis. This condition, which may be related to a food allergy, is caused by infiltration of cells called eosinophils in the esophagus.

Radiation therapy. This cancer treatment can lead to inflammation and scarring of the esophagus.

Oropharyngeal dysphagia

Certain conditions can weaken the throat muscles, making it difficult to move food from the mouth into the throat and esophagus when one start to swallow.

One may choke, gag or cough when try to swallow or have the sensation of food or fluids going down through windpipe (trachea) or up your nose. This may lead to pneumonia.

Causes of oropharyngeal dysphagia include:

Neurological disorders. Certain disorders — such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's disease — can cause dysphagia.

Neurological damage. Sudden neurological damage, such as from a stroke or brain or spinal cord injury, can affect the ability to swallow.

Pharyngeal diverticula. A small pouch that forms and collects food particles into the throat, often just above esophagus, leads to difficulty swallowing, gurgling sounds, bad breath, and repeated throat clearing or coughing.

Cancer. Certain cancers and some cancer treatments, such as radiation, can cause difficulty swallowing.