

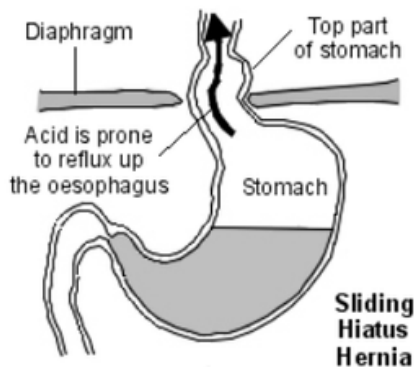
HIATUS HERNIA

What is a hiatus hernia?

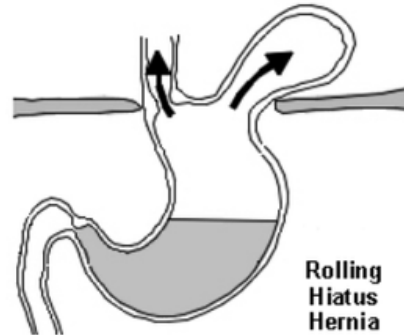
A **hiatus hernia** occurs when part of the stomach pushes up through the diaphragm into the chest. The diaphragm normally helps keep the stomach in place, but if the opening (hiatus) becomes weak or wide, the stomach can slip through [1].

Types of hiatus hernia

Sliding hiatus hernias This is the most common type of hiatus hernia, where the lower part of the oesophagus and the upper portion of the stomach slide up and down through the diaphragm's opening (the hiatus) [1].



Para-oesophageal hiatus hernia Also called a rolling hiatus hernia, this type is less common. It happens when part of the stomach pushes up through the diaphragm and sits beside the oesophagus. It is less common, but more likely to cause problems [1].



Hiatus hernia symptoms

Some people with hiatal hernia have no symptoms, while others develop signs of acid reflux (GORD), such as:

- Heartburn and chest discomfort
- Food or fluid coming back up
- Bloating, belching, or a sour taste in the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing or pain after meals

Symptoms are often worse when lying flat, bending forward, or after large meals [1].

Causes and Risk Factors

Hiatus hernias are more common with age Risk factors include [1]:

- Being overweight
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Chronic coughing, straining, or heavy lifting

Diagnosis

A hiatal hernia may be suspected based on symptoms but is confirmed with tests such as [1]:

- **Gastroscopy** – a camera test that examines the oesophagus and stomach
- **Barium swallow X-ray** – where you drink a special liquid that outlines the hernia on X-ray

Complications

Most hiatus hernias are harmless, but some can lead to complications [1]:

- **Severe reflux oesophagitis** – inflammation of the lining of the oesophagus [1, 2]
- **Stricture** – narrowing of the oesophagus that can cause difficulty swallowing [1]
- **Barrett's oesophagus** – long-term damage from acid reflux, which slightly increases the risk of cancer [1, 2]
- **Stomach strangulation (rare, in para-oesophageal hernia)** – the blood supply to the stomach becomes trapped, requiring urgent surgery [1]

Treatment

Most hiatus hernias don't cause serious problems and can be managed without surgery. Treatment usually focuses on controlling acid reflux and relieving symptoms [1, 2].

Lifestyle Changes

Simple lifestyle adjustments can help reduce symptoms and prevent reflux (1, 2):

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Avoid lying down soon after eating
- Maintain a healthy weight

- Stop smoking and limit alcohol intake
- Raise the head of the bed to reduce night-time reflux

Medications

- **Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)**: reduce stomach acid and help heal inflammation [1, 2]
- **H2 blockers or antacids**: provide relief for milder or occasional symptoms [2]

Surgery

Surgery is only required if symptoms are severe, do not respond to medication, or if complications develop (such as obstruction, bleeding, or stomach strangulation) [1, 2].

Surgery involves returning the stomach to its normal position and tightening the hiatus [1].

When to See a Doctor

Seek medical attention if you experience any of the following [2]:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Persistent vomiting
- Unexplained weight loss
- Severe chest or abdominal pain

Reference List

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK562200/>
2. Dyspepsia and Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disease: Investigation and Management of Dyspepsia, Symptoms Suggestive of Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disease, or Both. Published online September 2014.
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