

The exact cause of achalasia is not known. Some clinical researchers suspect that the condition may be caused by the degeneration of a group of nerves located in the chest (Auerbach's plexus). It is believed that there may be a rare, inherited form of achalasia, but this is not yet well understood at this time. Achalasia is a rare disorder that typically affects adults between the ages of 25 and 60 years. However, this disorder may occur at any age, including during childhood. Achalasia affects males and females in equal numbers except in cases that appear to reflect an inherited form. In those cases, it appears that males are twice as likely as females to be diagnosed with this disorder. X-ray examination (radiology) is frequently useful in the diagnosis of achalasia. Radiological examination, especially with the use of barium, may show enlargement (dilation) of the esophagus and the retention of food and secretions within the esophagus. Devices that measure fluid pressure (manometers) within the esophagus are used to confirm the diagnosis of achalasia.