

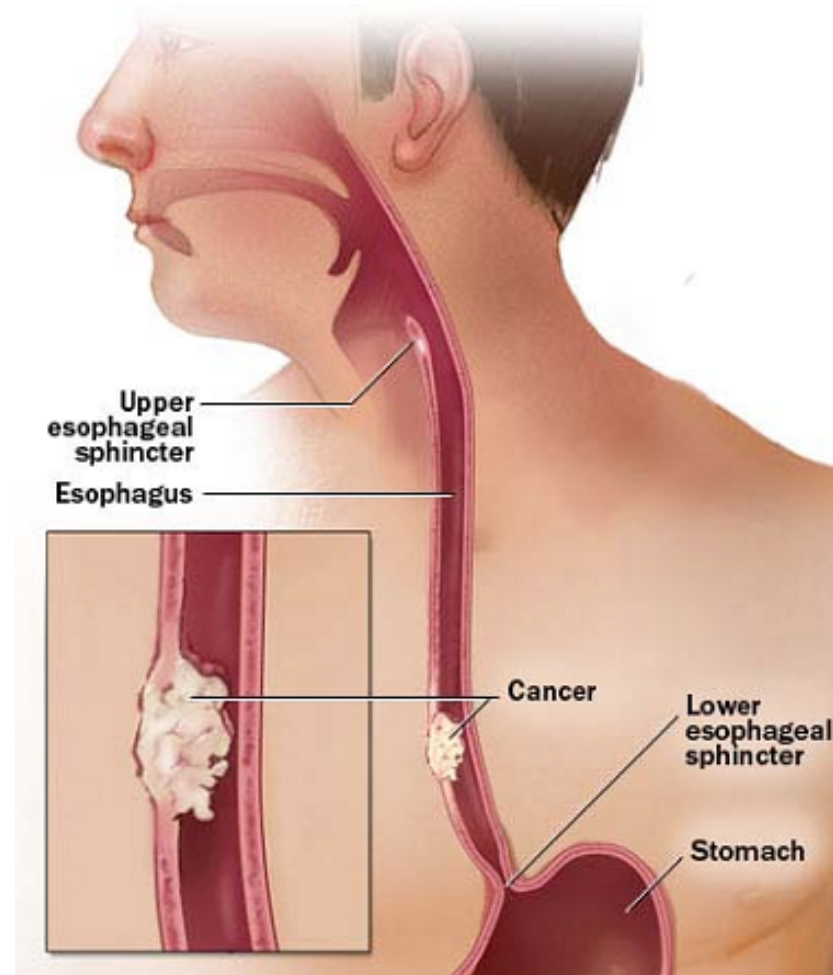
ESOPHAGEAL CANCER

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What is cancer of the esophagus?

- First we begin by describing the esophagus.
- The esophagus is a structure that connects the throat to the stomach, where food and liquids pass through thus its other name, food pipe.
- Esophageal cancer occurs when abnormal cells lining it lead to abnormal growth in and around the esophagus.



Who is at risk of getting esophageal cancer?

- In terms of age those between 60-70 years
- Men are likely to be affected more than women

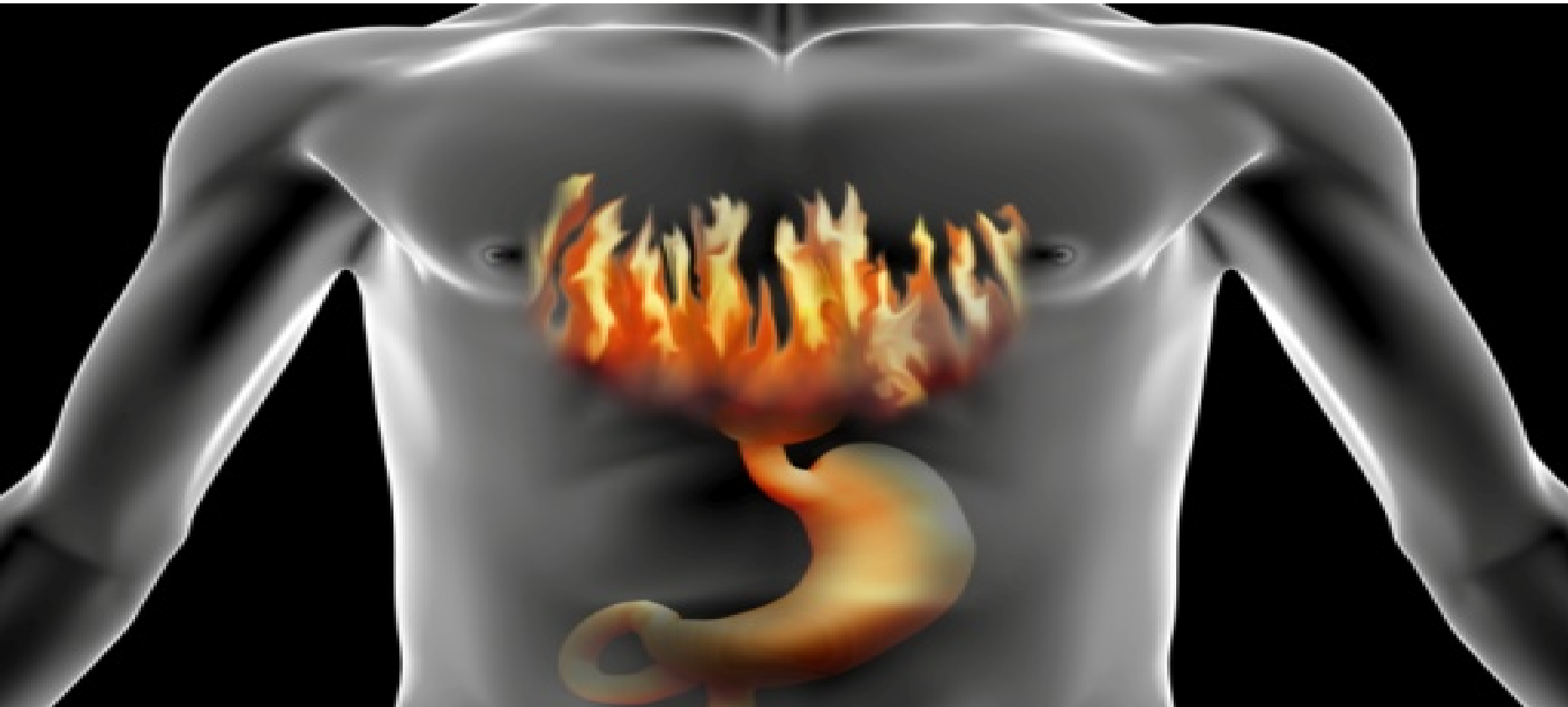


What would increase your chances of getting esophageal cancer?

- Prolonged severe heart burn.
- Tobacco smoking.
- High alcohol intake.
- A diet consisting of high cholesterol, refined cereals, processed red meat and lack of vitamin A & C.
- Pot belly.
- Breast cancer treated with radiotherapy.



HEART BURN



What would lower your chances of getting esophageal cancer?

- Treat a heart burn immediately it occurs and avoid foods that trigger it such as beans.
- A diet high in fiber, fruits with vitamin A & C, vegetables and addition of white meat.
- Avoid cigarette smoking.
- Reduce alcohol intake.



What are the symptoms or warning signs of esophageal cancer?

-The major symptom and warning sign is difficulty in swallowing food which is prolonged, progressive and does not stop even with medication.

Others include:

- Prolonged and persistent heart burn.
- Loss of appetite.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- There may be total obstruction of the esophagus so that food does not pass through



What to do when you suspect that you may have esophageal cancer?

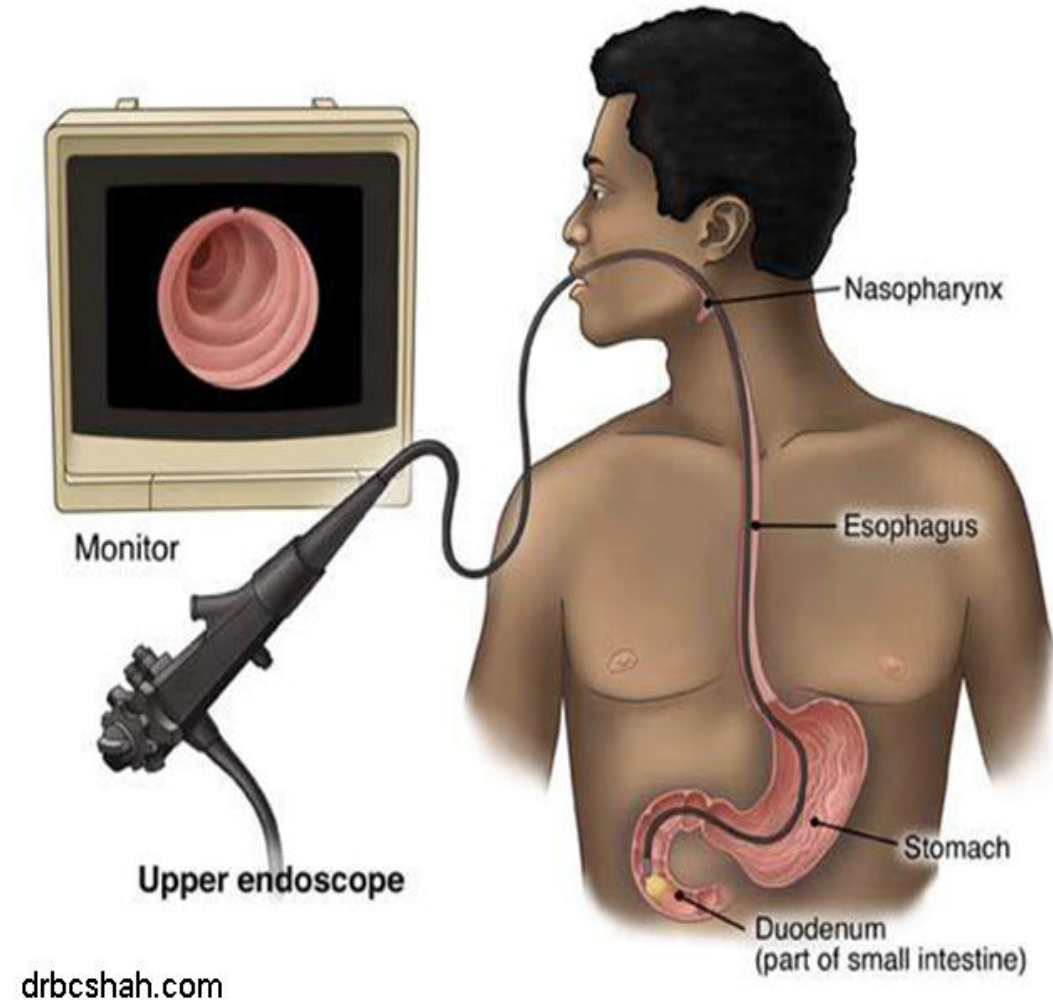
- It is important to get checked by a doctor before diagnosing yourself with esophageal cancer despite displaying the above symptoms.
- First make an appointment to see the doctor.
- The doctor is likely to order some tests to rule out the possibility of cancer.



Which tests are important in diagnosing esophageal cancer?

Two tests are important in ruling out esophageal cancer:

- Endoscopy involves the insertion of a tube in your esophagus to allow the doctor to visualize the internal structures to see if there is any abnormality as shown in the diagram.
- Barium swallow where the doctor will give you something called a barium solution to swallow in preparation for an X-ray which will help him see your esophagus clearly on the X-ray.



In case you are diagnosed with esophageal cancer, what next???

- If you are diagnosed with esophageal cancer then there is still hope for you.
- It is not a death sentence
- Initially the doctors will have to determine how far your cancer has spread.
- There are treatment options available to help improve your symptoms and to kill the cancer cells.
- A cure is however not available.

What are the treatment options available for esophageal cancer?

There are 4 different types of treatment available:

- Surgery-the abnormal part of the esophagus affected is removed through a surgical procedure.
- Chemotherapy-drugs are given to either kill or stop the growth of the cancer cells.
- Radiotherapy-the person is exposed to radiation targeted at the cancerous cells in order to destroy them, as shown in the diagram.
- Palliative therapy-this is meant to relieve symptoms and provide psychological support to the patient and their family.



What are the common side effects of treatment?

- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Hair loss
- Mouth sores
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Low blood counts
- Hoarse voice after surgery