

Hiatus hernia

A hiatus hernia is when part of your stomach moves up into your chest. It's very common if you're over 50. It does not normally need treatment if it is not causing you problems.

Symptoms of a hiatus hernia

You can have a hiatus hernia without knowing and without it being a problem.

With a hiatus hernia you may:

- have a painful burning feeling in your chest, often after eating (heartburn)
- bring up small amounts of food or bitter-tasting fluids (acid reflux)
- have bad breath
- burp and feel bloated
- feel or be sick
- have difficulty or pain when swallowing

These are the symptoms of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD).

Get an urgent GP appointment if

you have indigestion or acid reflux and:

- you've lost weight for no reason
- swallowing becomes difficult
- you're being sick or vomiting frequently
- there's blood in your sick
- you have pain in your upper tummy
- your symptoms are very bad or getting worse

Causes of a hiatus hernia

It's not clear what causes a hiatus hernia. Anyone can have one, but it's more common if you're over

50, pregnant or overweight.

Treatment for a hiatus hernia

Change your eating habits

For example, eat smaller, more frequent meals and do other things to help with the symptoms of GORD.

If you smoke, try to give up

Tobacco smoke can irritate your digestive system and make your symptoms worse.

[Get help with giving up smoking](#)

Buy medicines from the pharmacy

Ask the pharmacist what you should take to help with the symptoms of GORD.

See a GP

If medicines from the pharmacy and changing your eating habits don't help, your GP can prescribe stronger medicines.

Further tests

Your GP can send you for further tests to find out if your symptoms are caused by a hiatus hernia. They might also prescribe medicines for long-term GORD.

Surgery

Your GP might refer you to a specialist to check if you need surgery. This usually only happens if other treatments haven't worked and you keep having very bad symptoms.

Surgery for a hiatus hernia

Keyhole surgery is usually used for a hiatus hernia. This involves making small cuts in your tummy (abdomen). It's done under general anaesthetic, so you'll be asleep during the operation.

After surgery it usually takes:

- 2 to 3 days before you can go home
- 3 to 6 weeks to before you can go back to work
- 6 weeks before you can eat what you want
- a few months to recover from side effects like bloating, burping, farting and difficulty swallowing

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