

ACHALASIA – A GASTRIC RARE DISEASE

Many Patients Confuse Gastric Disease Symptoms as Non-Serious Reactions to Lifestyle Choices

Achalasia Can Develop at Any Age, But Occurs Most Frequently Between the Ages of 30-60

Achalasia affects your esophagus making it difficult or impossible to eat and drink normally. It is a long-term disease, so it is important to learn and be aware of the signs and symptoms.

Please use this guide as a resource for knowledge and understanding of achalasia cause, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and risks & complications.

01 | Cause

The exact cause of achalasia is not known but there have been some relationships with genetics, autoimmune diseases, herpes and other viral infections. The nerve cells that control swallowing degenerate making it difficult and even dangerous to eat or drink.

02 | Symptoms

With achalasia the esophagus is not successfully leading food into the stomach. The muscles are not contracting and relaxing in a manner for successful consumption of foods and fluids. Due to the nature of the disease a patient might experience:

- Trouble swallowing
- Weight loss
- Heartburn
- Pain and discomfort after eating
- Regurgitation

03 | Diagnosis

The disease is best diagnosed after an esophageal manometry which involves placing a tube in your esophagus while you swallow. While in the throat the tube measures muscle activity and analyzes functionality. Other possible diagnostic tests are endoscopy or a barium swallow with x-ray.

04 | Treatment

The priority in treatment of achalasia is to repair or alter function of the esophageal sphincter. This is done by either dilating it with a balloon via pneumatic dilation or through an esophagomyotomy. The esophagomyotomy is a surgery consisting of an incision to access the sphincter and alter it for better flow into the stomach. Botox injections are also an option to help relax the sphincter muscle while medications can help those with minor symptoms.

05 | Long-Term Outlook

Dilation may initially work but after numerous procedures surgery may be needed. Ninety-five percent of patients who undergo surgical treatment experience some relief from symptoms. With Surgery there are possible complications, therefore it is important to discuss all options with your provider.

To learn more about rare diseases, please visit:

<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/>

Did You Know?

Achalasia is a rare disease affecting about 1 in every 100,000 people

References

<https://www.healthline.com/health/achalasia#symptoms>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/achalasia/symptoms-causes/syc-20352850>