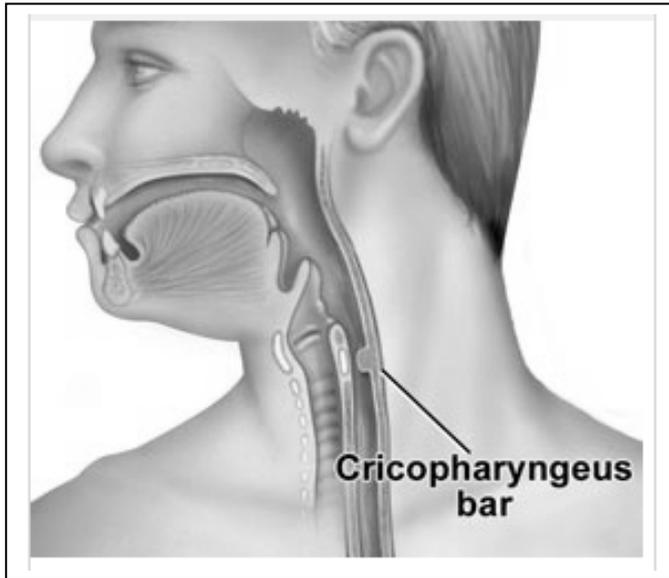


Globus pharyngeus (Lump in throat)



A feeling of a lump in your throat (*globus* sensation) is distinct from swallowing problems (*dysphagia*) that may imply a more serious problem. Dysphagia is when solids and liquids stick in your throat on the way down to your stomach, or the food takes longer to get to the stomach.

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CAUSES OF GLOBUS SENSATION (Lump in the throat)

Globus pharyngeus is a relatively common problem in which there is a sense of obstruction or difficulty in swallowing, but food and liquids move normally to the stomach. The globus sensation is most commonly caused by acid refluxing from the stomach causing swelling on the lining of the throat (inflammation). This may lead you to feel that you have to “clear your throat”. This acid may reflux up your oesophagus (gullet) at night and you may not be awake to feel it. This acid coming up the throat causes the muscle at the top of your oesophagus (*cricopharyngeus*) to spasm, creating a “tight” feeling in your throat. Although the acid reflux responds immediately to antacid treatment, the swelling and muscle spasm take many weeks or months to improve.

EVALUATION (DIAGNOSIS) OF SWALLOWING PROBLEMS

A number of tests will help your caregiver rule out a more serious cause of your swallowing problems. Your doctor will inspect the top of your throat with a flexible telescope (endoscope) or mirror to rule out a cancer. Your doctor will feel your neck to check for lumps and you may require an ultrasound or CT scan to check for lumps in the neck pressing on your oesophagus (especially in the thyroid gland). Other tests including a barium swallow, *upper gastrointestinal endoscopy* and motility studies may occasionally be required.

TREATMENT OF ACID REFLUX/ GLOBUS SENSATION

The globus sensation usually responds to acid control. Medication with strong antacid action (eg omeprazole) is effective but usually requires twice daily, high dose treatment continuously for THREE to FOUR months to break the cycle of inflammation and spasm. Even one acid event may be enough to continue the cycle. Usually treatment is continued for 4-6 months after resolution of symptoms.

NON DRUG REDUCTION OF ACID REFLUX

Although medication is effective, your GP may help you with a number of measures that can reduce acid regurgitation and improve your long-term health:

- Weight loss to an ideal weight
- Stop smoking
- Avoid large meals within 2 hours of sleeping
- Reduction of caffeine, fatty foods and alcohol
- Elevation of the bed head by 10-15cm
- Avoid tight fitting clothes around the abdomen

SEEK EARLY MEDICAL REVIEW IF:

- Your swallowing problem gets worse (especially if you are unable to take solid food)
- Food or other object becomes lodged in your throat or esophagus and won't move.
- You can feel or see any enlarging lumps in your mouth, throat or neck
- You have worsening pain on swallowing



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