



SWALLOWING DIFFICULTY

Pain or discomfort when attempting to swallow; difficulty in swallowing any sort of food

CAUSES

ESOPHAGEAL MOTILITY DISORDER

A person's orderly digestion largely depends on a process called the *peristalsis movement*, wherein gastrointestinal organs contract and expand to digest food and break them down to the nutrients which the body needs to survive. However, sometimes, for some reason, this system of contraction and expansion goes awry and uncoordinated. Sometimes, too, the valve which is located at the lower end of the esophagus which keeps the gastric juices from coming up the long tube towards the mouth, malfunctions. The latter condition is called *achalasia*. Medical help should be sought.

Symptoms:

- Difficulty in swallowing food and keeping it down

DO:

- Consult a physician if you suspect you have this condition.

DON'T:

- Don't smoke.

Over-the-counter antacids may help relieve heartburn.

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

Gastroesophageal reflux is a normal occurrence after a meal. However, it becomes a disease when the degree of exposure of esophageal mucus to gastric contents is greater than usual and exhibits several symptoms. It is caused by the extraordinary amount of acid in the gastrointestinal system which, as a result, flows back up to the esophagus.

Symptoms:

- Heartburn, pain in the upper abdomen, and a sour, bitter taste in the mouth

DO:

- Take an over-the-counter antacid.

DON'T:

- Do not drink coffee, alcohol, citrus juices or anything acidic. If swallowing is not overly difficult, try munching on chocolate or peppermint gum, but do not overeat.
- Don't smoke.





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INFECTION

Sometimes, difficulty in swallowing that is linked to other symptoms may indicate a viral or bacterial infection in a person's upper respiratory tract.

Symptoms:

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty in swallowing

DO:

- Take throat lozenges to help soothe the upper respiratory tract.
- Consult a physician as antibiotics may be in order.

DON'T:

- Don't smoke.

OTHER CAUSES

Dry throat or a foreign object (such as a fish bone) lodged in one's throat may cause discomfort or pain in swallowing. Drink plenty of water to alleviate dry throat.

SWEATINESS

Excessive perspiration

OBESITY

Obesity is a problem that is not only physical but also sometimes emotional and mental. Eating a high-calorie diet that is more than what the body consumes can induce a person to become overweight, a condition which may eventually lead to obesity. The person may also indulge in very little physical activity and have a low metabolic rate.

Obesity, aside from being a problem in itself (lethargy, sleepiness, shortness of breath, ridicule from society) can also give rise to certain complications such as heart disease, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, back problems, and some forms of cancer.

Symptoms:

- Body weight that is at least 20% in excess of the normal body weight for one's height, age, sex and build
- Waist measurement greater than 40 in men and 35 in women
- Shortness of breath
- Sweatiness

DO:

- Dress comfortably in light clothes that are preferably made of cotton which absorb sweat and allow the skin to breathe.
- Use a deodorant stick or roll-on that contains anti-perspirant ingredients for the underarms.
- Try to lose weight through a well-balanced diet and regular exercise.

DON'T:

- Don't eat food high in sugar, fat and cholesterol.