

About Hiatus Hernia

What is a hiatus hernia?

A hiatus (or hiatal) hernia means that part of the stomach is sticking out through the diaphragm muscle (*see diagram*) instead of being contained under it. Hiatus hernia is very common in people over 50, and more common in women than men.

What are the symptoms?

Some people with hiatus hernia have no symptoms, but for many, heartburn is a common symptom. When the opening of the stomach doesn't close properly, stomach contents, which contain acid, are pushed back into the esophagus. This causes a burning sensation. Food particles may be pushed back up as well.

How is a hiatus hernia treated?

If a person has no symptoms, treatment is usually not needed. For people with symptoms, a hiatus hernia is treated in much the same way as esophageal reflux. By following your doctor's instructions, you can help prevent heartburn and pain. Medications may also be ordered.

Here are some suggestions for reducing or preventing heartburn. Check with your doctor to find out which may be right for you.

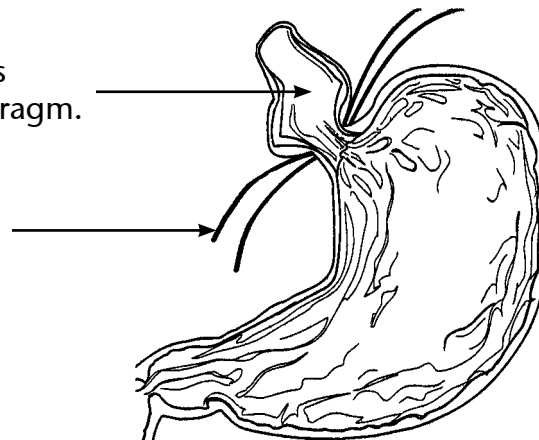
- Stop smoking. If you can't stop completely, cut down.
- Consume coffee, alcohol, chocolate and fatty foods only in moderation. Avoid foods that cause you to have heartburn.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals during the day. Try to avoid eating within four hours of bedtime.
- Take your medications as instructed.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Do not wear tight belts.
- Lose weight if your doctor feels this would help.
- If advised by your doctor, sleep with the head of your bed raised about six to eight inches (on blocks or books).
- Call your doctor if symptoms continue after following these suggestions.

If you have any further questions, please ask us.

Hiatal hernia

This part of the stomach is normally below the diaphragm.

This is the diaphragm, the muscle between the abdomen and chest.



The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.