



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Hiatal Hernia

To manage a hiatal hernia, you should work closely with your doctor to manage symptoms and find effective treatments. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

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| Barium Swallow | In conjunction with an upper GI series (x-ray exam of the pharynx, esophagus, stomach and small intestine), a barium swallow can help to diagnose a hiatal hernia. |
| Dysphagia | The medical term for difficulty swallowing. Hiatal hernias can cause obstructions and delays in emptying the lower part of the esophagus, eventually causing dysphagia. |
| Esophagus | The muscular tube that connects the throat to the stomach. |
| Esophageal Manometry | A medical test used to identify problems with movement in the esophagus, including hiatal hernias. The test uses a thin, pressure sensitive tube that passes through the nose, to the back of the throat, down the esophagus and to the stomach. |
| Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) | A digestive disorder where acidic gastric fluid flows backward into the esophagus, causing heartburn. Hiatal hernias can result from long-lasting GERD or GERD can be a symptom of a hiatal hernia. |
| Hiatus | The opening at the diaphragm, the muscular wall that separates the chest cavity from the abdomen. In the cause of a hiatal hernia, the stomach bulges up to the chest through the hiatus. |
| Histamine H2-Receptor Antagonists (H2 Blockers) | A group of medications that reduce the amount of stomach acid. H2 blockers can help reduce gastric acid and symptoms of hiatal hernias. |
| Laparoscopic Fundoplication | The most commonly performed surgery for hiatal hernias. It requires the surgeon to make only a few tiny incisions in the abdomen. |
| Proton-Pump Inhibitor (PPI) | PPIs are a class of drugs that can help to treat hiatal hernias by reducing stomach acid and allow time for the damaged esophagus to heal. |
| Regurgitation | When foods remain in the hiatal hernia and return back to the mouth. |
| Sliding Hernia | A condition that causes the stomach and lower part of the esophagus to slide up into the chest through the hiatus. Sliding hernias are the most common types of hernias. |
| Upper Endoscopy (EGD) | A procedure using a thin scope with a light and camera to look at the stomach, esophagus, and the duodenum (the first part of the small intestine). |



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your hiatal hernia.

About Symptoms

- What are the most common symptoms?
- What if I don't have symptoms?
- Is regurgitation a serious side effect?
- What if I have pain?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Am I too young for a hiatal hernia?
- What role does my diet play?
- Is smoking a risk factor? Will quitting reduce my risk?
- What other risk factors play a role in development?
- Does pregnancy play a part in development of a hiatal hernia?

About Diagnosis

- What types of tests are used to diagnosis a hiatal hernia?
- How does an endoscopy help with diagnosis?
- Will I need a barium swallow?
- How are the results of gastric emptying studies interpreted?
- What other testing is used for diagnosis of a hiatal hernia?
- What type of hernia do I have?

About Treatment

- Should I try any over the counter (OTC) medications to manage my symptoms?
- What are my prescription medication treatment options?
- Will I need surgery?
- How effective is surgery?
