

Medicine Hx - Gastrointestinal System

History of “Dysphagia”

A. Overview:

Dysphagia is defined as difficulty in swallowing. It is the sensation of hesitation or delay in passage of food during swallowing. Therefore, dysphagia differs from **odynophagia**, which refers to pain with swallowing

Dysphagia can be classified as either oropharyngeal or esophageal.

- **Oropharyngeal (or transfer) dysphagia** occurs from disorders that affect the oropharyngeal area, typically from neurologic or myogenic abnormalities as well as oropharyngeal tumors.
- **Esophageal dysphagia** occurs from disorders of the esophagus and is most commonly due to mechanical obstruction or altered motility of the esophagus.

B. Differential diagnosis:

DDx	What support this diagnosis?
“Gastrointestinal system”	
Gastroesophageal reflux disease	Typical Symptoms: heartburn, regurgitation of food, and dysphagia.
Achalasia	Typical Symptoms: progressive difficulty swallowing, dysphagia for solids and liquids, regurgitation of bland undigested food or saliva
Zenker's diverticulum	Risk factors: abnormal esophageal motility, esophageal shortening, and GERD. Typical symptoms: transient oropharyngeal dysphagia, pulmonary aspiration, and foul breath.

C. Questions to Ask the Patient with this presentation and their interpretation

Questions	What you think about ... !
Site	
Where does the hold-up occur? (Please point to the area)	Pointing to the lower esophagus suggests mechanical obstruction in the lower esophagus.
Character	
Do you have trouble swallowing fluids or liquids or both?	Solids and liquids suggests a motor problem e.g. achalasia; solids only suggests a mechanical problem like cancer or a stricture.

Onset	
Is the trouble swallowing intermittent or persistent?	Intermittent suggests eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), a lower esophageal ring or motor problem.
How long have you had these symptoms?	Dysphagia of short duration suggests an inflammatory process.
Progression	
Has the problem been getting progressively worse?	This suggests cancer or stricture.
Is it painful to swallow? (Odynophagia)	This suggests acute inflammation of the esophagus.
Associated symptoms	
Do you cough or choke on starting to swallow?	This suggests oropharyngeal dysphagia.
Do you hear a gurgling noise when you swallow?	Zenker's diverticulum.
Do you feel like you have bad breath?	Halitosis is associated with Zenker's diverticulum.
Do you regurgitate old foods?	Distal esophageal obstruction, Zenker's diverticulum, Achalasia.
Do you have heartburn or acid regurgitation?	Suggests GERD.
Have you been losing weight?	Worry about cancer.
Do you have asthma or hay fever?	Further supportive of EoE.

D. Systemic review: Systemic review: Go to Medicine – Hx – “General” topic!

432 OSCE TEAM

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