

Schatzki ring

What is a Schatzki ring?

A Schatzki ring, also called a Schatzki-Gary ring, is a narrowing of the lower oesophagus (the tube connecting your mouth to your stomach) caused by a smooth, non-cancerous ring of the gut lining or muscular tissue. It is commonly linked with hiatus hernia, which is when part of the stomach squeezes up into the chest through an opening ("hiatus") in the diaphragm.

What are the symptoms?

Most Schatzki rings cause no symptoms and individuals are unaware of their presence. Some individuals have trouble swallowing (known as dysphagia) as the diameter of the ring shrinks. Food that is solid or poorly chewed can become caught, causing chest pain. If the food does not pass into the stomach it may be regurgitated, coming back up into your mouth, or cause vomiting.

What causes a Schatzki ring?

Doctors are unsure why some people develop a Schatzki ring but they can run in families. In others, it is thought that the irritation caused by acid reflux or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) can contribute to the formation of a Schatzki ring. The acid causes inflammation and damage, which is thought to form scar tissue as it heals, creating the Schatzki ring.

GERD can also lead to Barrett's oesophagus where irregular cells form in your oesophageal lining. Experts think that a Schatzki ring is your body's response to too much acid in the oesophagus. It might be a natural attempt to block off acid and protect you from getting Barrett's oesophagus.

Conditions including eosinophilic oesophagitis (EoE) and Plummer-Vinson syndrome are also thought to be linked to the formation of a Schatzki ring. EoE is a condition where white blood cells called eosinophils build up within the oesophagus causing inflammation and tissue damage. Some people with EoE also have a Schatzki ring.

Plummer-Vinson syndrome caused by untreated and severe iron-deficiency anaemia can cause thin tissues, called oesophageal webs, to grow across your upper oesophagus. Some people with Plummer-Vinson syndrome also have a Schatzki ring.

How is a Schatzki ring diagnosed?

The diagnosis of Schatzki ring can usually be made by barium x-ray examination of the oesophagus. In patients with trouble swallowing, doctors usually also order an endoscopy of the upper gastrointestinal tract. This involves an endoscopist passing a flexible endoscope with camera through your mouth or nose, giving direct visualisation of the lining of the oesophagus and the stomach.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

In rare cases a build-up of food cannot be regurgitated and can become impacted. This causes the patient to experience continued chest pain and difficulty handling saliva and secretions. The obstruction will require an endoscopy to extract the impacted food and relieve the obstruction.

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

If you experience symptoms from your Schatzki ring, it can be treated with an endoscopic procedure under sedation known as a dilatation, where the narrowing is stretched or fractured using dilator balloons. The result will be a wider opening that allows solid food to pass more comfortably, relieving your symptoms.

Sources of information

www.webmd.com

www.bsuh.nhs.uk

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After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
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The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet:
Diagnostic, Anaesthetics and Surgery

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