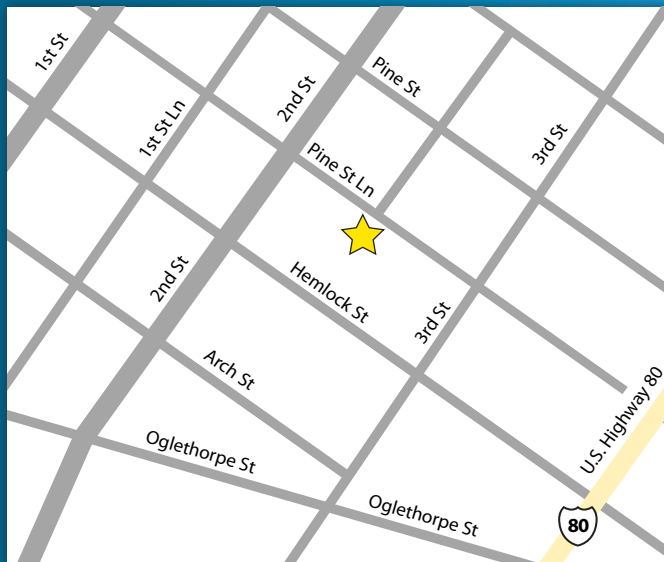




About the ENT Center of Central Georgia

The ENT Center of Central Georgia brings together the very best physicians and support staff dedicated to providing you an exceptional patient experience. In our pursuit to provide excellence in medical treatment, we listen to our patients and focus on their symptoms. We develop individualized treatment plans based on your unique needs and treat you like we would a family member. Whether you have hearing problems, allergies, dizziness, sinus infections, snoring, or any other ear, nose, and throat related problem, we can help.

For more information, contact one of the elite health care professionals at The ENT Center of Central Georgia today: 1-800-253-8953

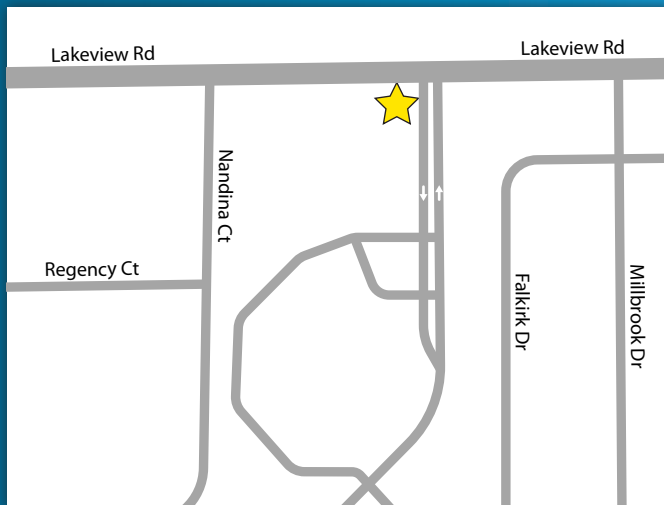


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The ENT Center of Central Georgia

Our Doctors Explain: DYSPHAGIA (SWALLOWING DISORDERS)



www.theentcenter.com



What Is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the medical term for difficulty swallowing, or the sensation that food is stuck in the throat or chest. It usually indicates an inability of the esophagus to properly move food from the mouth to the stomach. It can affect people of all ages, but is most commonly associated with the elderly.

When we swallow, food or liquid is carried from the mouth through the pharynx and esophagus into the stomach, where it is digested. This is a mostly involuntary process, one that requires little thought. But when something goes wrong, food or liquid can become stuck or lodged in the throat, chest or sternum.

There are many possible causes, outside of age, that directly cause or worsen dysphagia— stroke, esophagus abnormalities, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, etc.



What Are the Symptoms of Dysphagia?

Patients experiencing dysphagia will notice difficulty and pain while swallowing, and may be accompanied by choking, coughing, gagging, drooling, regurgitation or hoarseness. Other symptoms might include chest pain, heartburn, belching, sore throat, and weight loss.

A number of conditions can cause dysphagia. Children may suffer from congenital defects or physical deformations, or conditions like cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy.

In adults, neuromuscular disorders, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), stroke, smoking, alcohol, a pouch in the esophagus and poor teeth can all lead to swallowing difficulties.

How Is Dysphagia Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask a series of questions about symptoms—how long they’ve been present, and what types of issues you may have with liquids, solids or both. They may also use a scope to evaluate your voice box in office.

Next, you’ll likely be asked to participate in a swallow study or test, followed up by, or in tandem with, a surgical endoscopy, in which your doctor will use a camera to examine your esophagus.



How Is Dysphagia Treated?

How a swallowing disorder is treated depends on the cause, and typically involves medications, swallowing exercises or surgery.

Lifestyle changes often work in patients whose dysphagia results from GERD; avoiding alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, and eating smaller, more frequent meals may be enough to prevent acid reflux and the resultant swallowing difficulties from occurring.

Patients with severe swallowing difficulties may be hospitalized and fed intravenously to ensure they don’t become malnourished and lose excess weight.

Fortunately, though, for most cases, chewing your food slowly and thoroughly is the best way to prevent dysphagia.