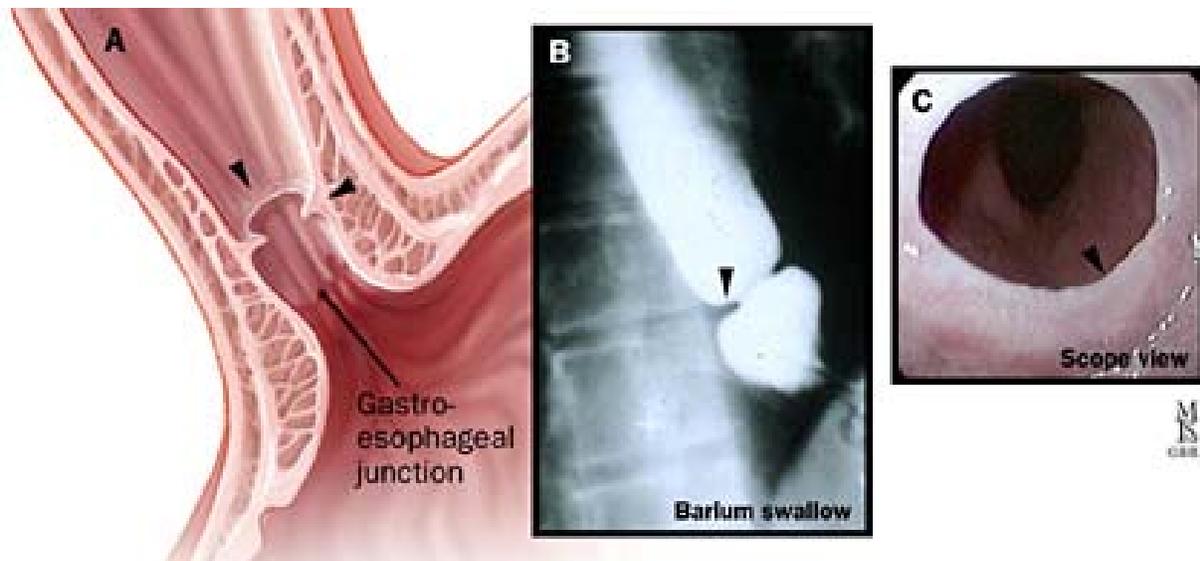


Schatzki's Ring

What is Schatzki's ring?

Schatzki's ring is a smooth, benign narrow ring located in the lower end of the esophagus (the food pipe), at the junction between the esophagus and the stomach. These rings are common, occurring in up to 15% of the population. The cause is not clearly understood; some people may be born with it or it may be caused by long term gastro esophageal reflux.



What are symptoms of Schatzki's ring?

The majority of these rings do not cause symptoms and patients are unaware of their presence, however when the opening of the esophagus becomes small, solid, poorly chewed foods, especially meats (steak, chicken, hot dogs) and breads, can get caught at the level of the ring and the patient may experience chest pain or a sticking sensation in the chest with swallowing (referred to as "dysphagia").

If the food becomes stuck, some patients may have to regurgitate or vomit the food before they can resume eating. Rarely, the food can become impacted (the food cannot pass nor can it be regurgitated). This can cause chest pain, a choking sensation and inability to swallow food, liquids or saliva. In this case, endoscopic procedure (such as upper endoscopy) is required to remove the impacted food.

How is Schatzki's ring diagnosed?

The diagnosis of a Schatzki's ring can be made by barium x-ray of the esophagus (esophagram) or upper endoscopy (EGD). During an EGD, a flexible viewing tube is inserted through the mouth into the esophagus. It allows for direct visualization of the inner lining of the esophagus and the stomach.

How is Schatzki's ring treated?

Management involves procedures that will stretch or break these rings which allowing easier passage of solid food. Stretching can be performed with endoscopes, tapered dilators inserted through the mouth, or dilator balloons placed through an endoscope. Repeated procedures are sometimes necessary. Acid reducing medications are thought to reduce recurrence of rings and are often prescribed.

If you experience sensation of food stuck in the esophagus and are unable to swallow solid or liquid food or saliva, you should go to emergency room for evaluation. Do not try to eat or drink trying to "push" stuck food down. Seek medical help without delay.

References: UpToDate, Gulchin A Ergun MD, Peter Kahrilas MD