

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT EOSINOPHILIC ESOPHAGITIS

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## What Is Eosinophilic Esophagitis?

Eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) is a chronic condition that happens when food allergies cause your esophagus to become inflamed and damaged. The esophagus is the tube that leads from your mouth to your stomach. This can make it painful to eat and hard to swallow food.

## What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms differ between children and adults. In children, the most common symptoms include:

- Failure to thrive (not growing properly)
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach or chest pain
- Heartburn

In teenagers and adults, the most common symptom is difficulty swallowing. EoE is the most common cause of emergency room visits for food getting stuck in the esophagus. Many people who have EoE develop behaviors to manage this symptom. These behaviors might include:

- Eating very slowly
- Chewing carefully
- Cutting food into small pieces
- Drinking a lot of fluid with meals
- Avoiding certain difficult-to-swallow foods, like meat and bread

## What Are the Risk Factors?

EoE can occur in men and women of any ethnic group but is most common in white men. If you have other allergic conditions, you are more likely to develop EoE. Having a parent or sibling with EoE can also increase your risk for it.

## How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask you questions about your medical and family history and your symptoms and behaviors. He or she will also do a physical examination.
- If your doctor suspects EoE, you will have a test called an endoscopy. For this test, a long, thin tube with a camera, called an endoscope, is passed through your mouth and into your esophagus to look for white spots or rings that are sometimes visible.
- During this test, your doctor will take a tissue sample, called a biopsy. This will help confirm the diagnosis.



## How Is It Treated?

An effective way to treat EoE is by identifying and eliminating food triggers that cause inflammation in your esophagus. To do so, you will need to follow an elimination diet. This is when you stop eating certain foods for a period of time. As you feel better, you add the foods back into your diet one at a time. You will need to have repeated endoscopies and biopsies through the elimination and reintroduction period. Sometimes, a stricter diet, called an elemental diet, is needed.

There are medicines that can help manage symptoms of EoE. These include medicines that suppress acid (called proton-pump inhibitors) and topical steroids.

If your esophagus has become narrow as a result of EoE, esophageal dilation can expand the esophagus and allow food to pass more easily. It should be used along with diet and medication.

## Questions for My Doctor

- What tests do I need to have?
- What foods should I eat, and what should I avoid?
- Will you help me find a dietitian who knows about elimination diets?
- What should I do if food gets stuck in my esophagus?
- Do I need to take medicine?
- When will my symptoms start to improve?
- How will I know if I need to have my esophagus dilated?
- What should I do if my symptoms do not improve after following an elimination diet?
- Do I need to see other medical specialists?
- How often do I need to follow up?

## For More Information



American College of Physicians  
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American Partnership for Eosinophilic Disorders  
<https://apfed.org/about-ead/egids/eoe>

MedlinePlus  
<https://medlineplus.gov/eosinophilicesophagitis.html>