

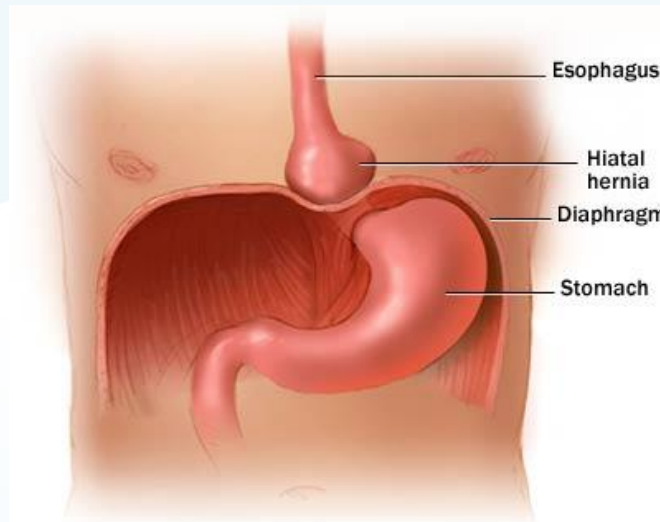
Hiatus Hernia

Hiatus hernias occur whenever a part of your stomach ends up pushing upward and through your diaphragm. The diaphragm normally has a tiny opening where the food tube passes along the way to connect with your stomach. Stomachs can push up and through the opening, thus causing the hernia.

In most situations, small hernias aren't going to cause any problems. You might not even realize you have the hernia unless the doctor finds it when looking at another type of condition or a routine examination. Large hernias can cause acid and food to end up backing up inside of your esophagus, which ends up causing heartburn. Medications and other self-care measures often help to relieve these symptoms, although large hernias might require surgery to remove them.

Hiatus Hernia Anatomy

The abdomen is the space in the body between the pelvis and the thorax. The diaphragm comes together to form the upper part of the abdomen. When at pelvic bone level, the abdomen will end and the pelvis will begin. Your abdomen houses all of your digestive organs, such as the stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, liver and small and large intestines. The organs are held together with connecting tissues allowing them to expand and slide into one another. Your abdomen also houses your spleen and kidneys.



How to Treat a Hiatus Hernia:

1. Antacids for Neutralizing Stomach Acid

An over-the-counter antacid such as Rolaids, Maalox, Tums and Mylanta can provide you with the quick relief you need.

2. Medication for Reducing the Production of Acid

An H-2 receptor blocker, such as Pepcid AC, Axid AR, Tagamet HB or Zantac 75, can help to reduce acid buildup. Stronger versions of any of these medications are available with a prescription.

3. Medications for Blocking the Production of Acid and Healing the Esophagus

Proton pump inhibitors will help to block the production of acid and provide the damaged esophageal tissue with the time it needs to heal. An over-the-counter inhibitor includes that of Prilosec OTC and Prevacid 24HR. You can get a stronger version of these medications with a prescription.

4. Surgery to Repair the Hernia

In a small amount of cases, you might need surgery to repair the hernia. Surgery is often reserved for an emergency situation and for those who didn't find relief from the medications for their acid reflux and heartburn. Hernia surgery is often done at the same time as surgery for gastroesophageal reflux disease.

The operation for the hernia might involve pulling your stomach downward into the abdomen and making the opening in your diaphragm smaller, removing the hernia or reconstructing a weakened esophageal sphincter.

Tips:

- Try eating several smaller meals throughout the course of the day, rather than just consuming a few larger meals.
- Avoid any foods that can trigger heartburn, such as onions, chocolate, citrus fruits, spicy foods and any tomato-based foods.
- Make sure to eat at least a couple hours before turning in for the night.
- For those who are overweight, try losing a few pounds to get more in line with your ideal weight. There is a large correlation between obesity and hiatus hernias.
- Avoid consuming alcohol.
- If you are a smoker, stop.
- Improve posture while eating; always sit at a table rather than eat on a sofa. Eating up-right can help prevent a hiatus hernia.
- Some therapists advocate the use of good diaphragmatic breathing. As well as having many health effects, it can help reduce the onset of a hernia.



- A peppermint tea after eating can aid digestion.