



Esophageal Dysmotility

You have been diagnosed with ineffective esophageal motility (IEM or hypotensive peristalsis). This is a relatively common disorder that can predispose people to dysphagia (swallowing difficulty) and reflux.

Causes of ineffective esophageal motility (IEM) include:

- Advancing age (presbyesophagus)
- The prolonged effect of acid and reflux over time
- Diabetes
- Achalasia
- Scleroderma
- Polymyositis
- Parkinson's disease
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Chagas disease
- Certain drugs

Symptoms of esophageal dysmotility can mimic gastroesophageal and extraesophageal reflux disease. These symptoms include heartburn, dysphagia,, regurgitation, cough, throat clearing, excessive throat mucus, globus (sensation of lump in the throat), and hoarseness.

It is important to diagnose IEM as cause of these symptoms because they're not known for improving with traditional anti-reflux medication and get can become worse with surgical anti-reflux therapy. Antacids and proton pump inhibitors do not usually help. They may be prescribed, however, to prevent further esophageal damage.

If you have IEM you must realize that you can NOT eat a regular meal like most individuals. If you eat a large meal at one sitting, a significant proportion of the food may sit in your esophagus for a very long time. The food can regurgitate out of the esophagus and cause cough, heartburn symptoms in the throat, and even be aspirated into the lungs. Eating a large meal for someone with esophageal dysmotility can be devastating. Behavioral modifications are essential and include:

1. Eat small, frequent meals. You must learn to eat like a goat. Snack and graze throughout the day. Avoid large and even medium sized meals.
2. Never lay down after eating. The food sitting in your esophagus can regurgitate and end up in your lungs. Give yourself three hours after eating before lying down.
3. Consume liquid alginate products after meals. The best form of alginate is only available in the UK and Europe, but can be purchased on Amazon as Gaviscon Advance Liquid. The alginate can form a raft and help keep the esophageal contents down.
4. Be very careful about taking pills. Pills can spend a long time in your esophagus and cause significant damage. Swallow pills with a large amount of water (12 oz.) and remain upright for an hour after taking them. Try getting liquid formulations of your medicines if possible. Compounding pharmacies can make almost any medication in liquid form.
5. Eat sitting completely upright only. Gravity can help empty the esophagus.
6. Avoid acidic foods. Acidic foods can pool in your esophagus and make symptoms worse.
7. Exercise and lose weight. Exercising after meals may exacerbate your symptoms and should be avoided. Eat after exercising.
8. Swallow only once per bite. Avoid double swallows. Taking a second swallow can diminish esophageal motility. Wait 15 seconds after every bite before initiating a second swallow.