

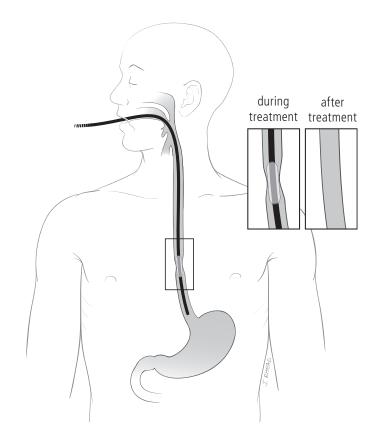
Esophageal Dilation

What is it?

Esophageal dilation is a treatment to widen a narrowed area of your esophagus (swallowing tube). Your doctor passes an instrument through your mouth and throat to the narrowed area. Stretching the area opens it up so food can pass through more easily.

Why do I need it?

If you have trouble swallowing, or food often feels as if it's stuck in your throat or chest, your doctor may recommend esophageal dilation to help food pass more easily. Several conditions may cause narrowed areas in your esophagus. The most common is acid reflux, when stomach acid leaks up into your esophagus. This can result in scar tissue that narrows the passage. Other causes of narrowing can include an extra ring of tissue (Schatzski's ring) at the base of the esophagus, scarring from a radiation treatment, cancer of the esophagus, or a problem with the way the esophagus moves.



Your doctor can widen a narrowed area of your esophagus.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
 Improved ability to swallow Reduced pain 	 Inflammation and painful swallowing A hole in the lining of the esophagus that may require surgery to repair (rare) A tear in the esophagus lining that may cause bleeding If sedatives are used, they may cause complications for people with heart or lung disease 	If you need an esophageal dilation there are no real alternatives. Not having a dilation when you need it could result in a more severe obstruction and possibly a tear in the esophagus.

How is it done?

Your doctor or nurse may spray the back of your throat with a local anesthetic to numb the area. Or, you may be put to sleep before the procedure. The doctor will pass an **endoscope** (a long thin tube with a tiny camera on the end) through your mouth. This lets the doctor look closely at your esophagus, stomach, and the first part of your intestine. The doctor may use a small balloon attached to the endoscope to stretch the narrowed area. Or, the doctor may remove the endoscope and insert a tapered instrument to stretch the narrowed area. If you're awake, you may feel pressure in the back of your throat or your chest during the procedure.

What happens next?

After the procedure you'll stay in a recovery area for a short time. When your throat is no longer numb, you can drink. You may have a sore throat for the rest of the day. You can eat again the next day. If you were put to sleep during the procedure, you will not be allowed to drive, even if you feel fine. Someone else will need to drive you home.

Will I need another dilation?

If your esophagus was very narrowed, you may need to have more than one dilation. This allows the esophagus to be stretched gradually, and decreases the chances of complications. Once the esophagus is completely dilated, repeat procedures may not be required. If your narrowing was caused by acid reflux, medications may decrease the need for repeat procedures.