

Eosinophilic Esophagitis (EoE)

What is it?

EoE is an inflammatory condition where the esophagus (food tube):

- Becomes filled with large numbers of white blood cells (eosinophils);
- Is irritated and swollen.

EoE has only recently been identified as a disease. About 1 in every 10,000 people have it, and 65% of those with EoE are male. It shares many symptoms with GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease). Babies and young children are more likely to have GERD-like symptoms. Teens are more likely to have difficulty swallowing or have food get stuck in the esophagus.

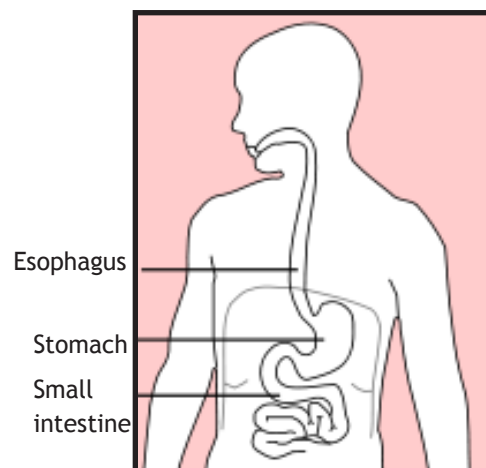
What are the symptoms?

Someone with EoE may notice:

- Difficulty swallowing food
- Pain (in the stomach or chest)
- Heartburn
- Nausea
- Regurgitation (food coming back up in the esophagus)
- Vomiting
- Food getting stuck in the esophagus
- Weight loss

In babies and very young children, the symptoms are similar to GERD:

- Feeding problems (picky eaters)
- Poor weight gain
- Vomiting or spitting up



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stomach_diagram.svg

Can EoE cause problems later?

Yes. Over time, EoE may cause the esophagus to become more narrow. This can sometimes cause food to get stuck in the esophagus. When this happens, the food has to be removed at the hospital, using a special tube called an endoscope. Correct diagnosis and treatment can prevent narrowing of the esophagus.

What causes it?

The exact cause of EoE is not known, but it seems to be related to food and environmental allergies. It is more common in people who have other allergic diseases such as asthma, eczema or allergic rhinitis (runny nose).

How is EoE diagnosed?

A procedure called an upper GI endoscopy is used to test for EoE. For this test, your child or teen will have a general anesthetic (special sleep medicine). During the endoscopy, a gastroenterologist will:

- Pass a flexible tube with a tiny camera into the esophagus
- Use an instrument in the tube to collect small samples of the lining of the esophagus
- Send the samples to the lab for testing



How is EoE treated?

The most effective treatment involves changes to the diet. Some medications can be helpful, especially in the short term (for example, acid blocking medications, anti-inflammatory drugs and allergic response blockers).

Your doctor may consult with an allergist to see if certain foods or environmental allergies are contributing to the EoE. Your doctor and dietitian will try to figure out which foods may be contributing to EoE. Some children and teens with EoE are allergic to one food, while others are allergic to several.



Diets to identify allergies

Skin tests for allergies can't always identify the foods that may be causing EoE. If this happens, your child or teen may need to follow an elimination or elemental diet for a few months, to help figure out which foods are causing EoE. The GI clinic dietitian will give you all the information you need to follow these diets, and follow up at clinic visits.

EoE Targeted Elimination Diet

Working with your allergist, your child or teen will avoid all foods known to cause allergic reactions. Other foods that may cause problems may also be removed for a trial period. The dietitian will monitor all remaining foods to make sure your child or teen is getting a balanced diet.

Elemental Diet

This is a special formula of amino acids (proteins), fats, vitamins, minerals and sugars. Your gastroenterologist and dietitian will decide how long your child or teen will take this formula without any other foods. Sometimes, tube feedings are needed so your child or teen can get enough nutrition to gain weight and grow. Children and teens who need tube feedings will have a naso-gastric (NG) tube, which is passed through the nostril, down the back of the throat to the esophagus and stomach.

Follow up

Your gastroenterologist will see how your child or teen responds to the elimination or elemental diet over the next few months. Most patients will also have a repeat upper GI endoscopy to see if the treatment plan (diet and sometimes medications) improves the EoE. The results from this endoscopy will help guide ongoing EoE treatment for your child or teen.

Want more info?

www.gikids.org

