

Globus

A persistent feeling of a 'lump in the throat' is sometimes described as 'globus' or 'globus pharyngeus'. This leaflet gives information about globus, what causes it and what you can do to help. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your speech and language therapist (SLT).

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of globus is the feeling of a lump or a sensation of 'pressure' in the throat. Many people describe a feeling of tightness or constriction, or report a feeling of mucous (a sticky substance produced by the body) that they are unable to clear. Others may notice that they have the sensation most when swallowing saliva, but may also find the feeling of a lump lessens when eating and drinking. These sensations can increase with stress and worry.

Once you feel the 'lump in your throat', it is only natural to wonder what has caused it and you may start 'testing' to see if it is still there by swallowing again and again. The more you swallow, the drier your mouth gets and the bigger the lump can feel.

The important thing to remember is that globus is just an abnormal **sensation** of a lump rather than an actual lump or growth.

What causes globus?

The most common cause of globus is thought to be acid reflux from the stomach. Acid in the stomach helps to break down our food. Reflux happens when this acid rises up into the tube that connects the stomach to the mouth (oesophagus or gullet). From here, it can enter the throat and cause a number of symptoms, including irritation, throat clearing and coughing. Acid reflux interferes with how your swallowing muscles relax, leading to a tight or globus sensation.

Other possible causes of globus may include a postnasal drip (when mucous runs from the nose into the back of the throat), stress and tiredness.

What are the investigations for globus?

If your GP thinks you have globus, you will usually be referred to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor for an examination to make sure that there is no other condition that could explain your symptoms. This is usually done by passing a flexible fibre-optic camera through your nose to view your nose, mouth and throat.

Sometimes, if the diagnosis is not clear, other tests and investigations may be recommended. These could include:

- X-rays
- an endoscopy (a long, thin tube with a camera attached is inserted and lets the doctor see your stomach lining)
- pH studies (to measure the acidity levels in your digestive system).

What is the treatment for globus?

For many people with globus, understanding the reasons for their symptoms may be all that is needed. For others, various treatments may be suggested:

- treatment for acid reflux, include medicines and diet changes (ask for a copy of our information leaflet **Acid reflux**)
- treatment for postnasal drip, for example, nasal spray
- treatment for stress, if this is a problem
- stopping smoking.

What can I do to reduce the globus sensation?

You should be reassured there is nothing blocking your throat. There are lots of things you can do to help.

Food and drink

- Drink lots of liquids in a day – aim for 1½ -2 litres of water per day.
- Drink water with meals to avoid swallowing anything too dry.
- Avoid coffee, too much alcohol, excessive amounts of tea, and fizzy or acidic drinks.
- Drink water or diluted cordials.

Throat clearing

Stop throat clearing if possible. Instead, try doing an effortful swallow – drink something, or try doing a big ‘sniff’ or blow out through pursed lips.

Medicines

Take any prescribed antacid medication regularly and at the correct times of the day. Do not suddenly stop taking them but discuss a gradual ‘step-down’ programme with your doctor.

Stress

- Stress in your life makes you tense and may increase the feeling of a ‘lump in your throat’. Try to relax by whatever means are realistic for you and your situation.
- If you are feeling tearful, but trying not to cry, you may also feel a ‘lump in your throat’. This is normal. Allow yourself to cry – it should help to ease the sensation.
- Try to find a way, or someone, to help you deal with your stress and/or sadness.

You may find that globus will gradually ease and eventually go away when you follow the advice given in this leaflet. If it does not, you should contact your GP or speech and language therapist.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department at Guy’s Hospital, **t:** 020 7188 6233, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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