

Schatzki Ring

A Schatzki ring is a ring of tissue near the end of the food pipe (esophagus) just above the opening to the stomach. Many people have them and don't know it, because most of the time Schatzki rings don't cause symptoms.

The area with the ring is narrower than the rest of the food pipe. Symptoms may occur when food gets caught at the ring before reaching the stomach. This can happen when solid food, such as steak or bread, isn't chewed enough. A Schatzki ring can cause chest pain or a feeling that the food is stuck and won't move into the stomach. After the food moves into the stomach, the symptoms go away. In more severe cases, the food gets stuck and the person must bring the food back up before they can eat normally again.

When a Schatzki ring causes ongoing swallowing problems, a doctor may use an endoscope or dilator to stretch or open the ring.

Diagnosis

Lower esophageal rings may be diagnosed clinically and confirmed by barium swallow (a radiological study to assess swallowing) and upper endoscopy (using a tube to enter the mouth in order to view the esophagus and stomach).

Treatment

The majority of symptomatic patients can be treated with the passage of dilators, which open the mucosal ring. Single dilations of symptomatic lower esophageal rings are safe, easily performed, and well tolerated. Recurrences can be successfully treated by repeated dilations.

