

Globus Sensation

Information for Patients

What is Globus Sensation?

Globus sensation is the feeling of having 'a lump in the throat' when no true lump exists.

What are the symptoms of globus sensation?

This may be felt as: tightness in the throat, a pressure, catarrh/mucus that you are unable to clear or simply an area of discomfort. The feeling is painless and can come and go but it does not interfere with eating and drinking. Many people with globus sensation notice the symptoms most when they are swallowing saliva or are feeling stressed and worried.

How common is it?

It is extremely common and many people can experience globus sensation from time to time. It can affect anyone of any age.

What causes globus sensation?

The exact cause of globus sensation is not known.

There were some theories that globus sensation was caused by acid coming up from the stomach affecting the throat. However studies have shown that the throat symptoms were not always affected by the treatment for the acid reflux. If you regularly suffer from heartburn or a metallic taste in your mouth, you may wish to speak to your GP to improve the acid reflux. If you are prescribed anti-acid medication, you should take it as instructed.

Other possible causes of globus may include stress and tiredness. If this is a problem a change in lifestyle or relaxation exercises can help.

Could globus sensation be a sign of anything else?

Many people with globus sensation are worried that it could be a sign of a serious problem. It is important to be able to tell the difference between a difficulty with swallowing (dysphagia) and globus.

In patients with dysphagia they will notice their foods, particularly solids, feel like they are getting stuck as they swallow. Unlike globus where the sensation tends to come and go, dysphagia can be constant and may become worse over time.

People with globus sensation do not usually have any problem with eating or drinking and in many people the sensation is often not present at all whilst eating food.

What investigations might be needed for globus sensation?

There is no specific test which confirms globus sensation. In many cases, further investigations are not required. However, if you develop any difficulty with swallowing, pain on swallowing, a lump in the neck or unintentional weight loss, you should seek further medical advice.

What is the treatment for globus sensation?

For many people with globus sensation, understanding the reasons for their symptoms may be all that is needed. For some people, globus sensation may improve with time- although the time it takes to improve can vary.

For others, there are various things you can do to help reduce the sensation:

Throat lubrication

- Drink more water; at least 1.5 litres (3 pints) a day
- Flavouring water with cordial may help increase the amount that you drink
- Continual sipping is good because swallowing helps to relax the throat
- Avoid too much tea, coffee, alcohol or fizzy drinks as they can make your throat dry.

Avoid excessive throat clearing

- You should consciously avoid throat clearing if possible as this can irritate the throat and make the globus sensation worse.

Managing stress

- Stress can increase the sensation of globus. If this is a problem, try to relax in a way that works for you
- If you feel you need further help, your GP may be able to help or provide further advice.

Stopping smoking

- Stopping smoking reduces irritation to the throat. If you would like help with stopping smoking, please contact your pharmacist or GP.