

Speech and Language Therapy

Globus

A persistent 'lump in the throat feeling' is sometimes described as 'globus'. This leaflet provides more information about globus, what causes it and what you can do to help. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to your speech and language therapist (SLT).

What causes globus?

The most common cause is tension in the cricopharyngeus muscle in the throat as a result of emotional stress. A good example of this is when you are watching a sad film and resist the temptation to cry – you experience a tightening of the muscles in the throat as you try to control your emotions.

Another common cause of globus is acid reflux from the stomach. Acid reflux is a form of indigestion. Acid in the stomach helps to break down our food. Reflux is when this acid rises up into the tube, called the oesophagus or gullet, which connects the stomach to the mouth. Acid reflux from the stomach into the larynx (voice box) is a common problem for many people. It causes irritation of the throat which may lead to excessive throat clearing, coughing, an unpleasant taste in the mouth, a change in voice quality (hoarseness) and/or a sensation of a 'lump' in the throat.

Osteo-arthritis of the cervical spine may be the cause of referred pain. Any pain in or around the neck can give rise to extremely tense laryngeal (throat) muscles. This is often experienced as a 'lump' sensation, tightness or constriction.

Rare causes include chronic laryngitis, enlarged tonsils or muscle spasm in the oesophagus. These can usually be ruled out when the doctor examines you, but occasionally tests will be recommended.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is a feeling of a lump, constriction (tension) or tightness in the throat. At times it may make you feel unable to eat or make swallowing uncomfortable, or you might find you notice the symptom more when you are swallowing saliva.

You may experience more severe symptoms during periods of stress or worry. You may feel the need to attempt to clear the throat by frequent swallowing, throat clearing and coughing. It is not uncommon to find minor voice problems such as huskiness, hoarseness or tiring of the voice in patients with globus.

What are the treatments for globus?

Often reassurance and explanation from the consultant ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor is sufficient to allow the tension to lesson and you will gradually lose the sensation that you

have been experiencing. The ENT doctor may have prescribed some medication for you to reduce acid reflux.

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 one and a half to two 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. Try swallowing once, drink something, 'sniff' or 'blow' out of your mouth instead.

Medicines

If you suffer with reflux, take your prescribed medicine or take antacid medicine after meals and/or before bedtime.

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. Try to find a way, or someone, to help you deal with your stress and/or sadness.

Contact details

Should you have any concerns or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Speech & Language Therapy Department

Tel: 01342 414526

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or an alternative format

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