

Hiatus Hernia

What is a hiatus hernia?

Normally, the junction between the food pipe (oesophagus) and the stomach is at the level of the diaphragm. When this junction (the gastro-oesophageal junction) moves up through the diaphragm taking with it some of the stomach, a **hiatus hernia** is present.

What causes a hiatus hernia?

With age, the elasticity of the diaphragm and supporting structures is reduced and thus the gastro-oesophageal junction and stomach can move up (“herniated”) into the chest cavity. Hiatus hernias occur in about 20% of the population and frequently cause no symptoms.

What are the symptoms of a hiatus hernia?

Hiatus hernias are frequently associated with “reflux” where the stomach contents move up into the oesophagus. This gives symptoms of heartburn and indigestion.

What are the complications of a hiatus hernia?

Complications include

1. Iron deficiency anaemia
2. Ulceration and bleeding
3. Fibrous narrowing of the oesophagus (see “**Peptic Oesophageal Strictures**”)