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Barrett's Esophagus

Definition:

A disorder in which the lining of the esophagus has cellular changes in response to irritation from Gastroesophageal reflux.

Causes, Incidence and Risk Factors:

Irritation of the lining of the esophagus by gastric acid secretions is the probable cause. The condition occurs more frequently in men than women. Risk factors are Gastroesophageal reflux. An increased risk of developing cancer of the esophagus is present with this condition.

Symptoms:

Heartburn
Burning pain under the sternum
Increased by bending or stooping
Increased by eating
Relieved by milk or antacids
Worse or frequent at night
Difficulty swallowing

Signs and Tests:

Looking at the esophagus with an endoscope and obtaining a sample of esophagus tissue for examination (esophagoscopy with biopsy) reveals Barrett's Esophagus.

Treatment:

Treatment includes general measures to control Gastroesophageal reflux, medications and surgery.

General Measures Include:

Weight reduction
Avoiding lying down after meals
Sleeping with the head of the bed elevated
Taking medications with plenty of water
Avoiding dietary fat, chocolate, caffeine and peppermint because they may cause lower esophageal pressure
Avoiding alcohol and tobacco

Medications to relieve symptoms and control Gastroesophageal reflux include antacids after meals and at bedtime, histamine H2 receptor blockers, cholinergic agents, and pro motility agents. Surgery to remove the portion of the esophagus (resection of the esophagus) may be indicated if a biopsy shows the type of cellular changes that tend to lead to cancer (dysplasia).

Expectations:

An increased risk of esophageal cancer is present. Follow up endoscopy to look for dysplasia or cancer is often advised.

Complications

Esophageal dysplasia
Esophageal cancer

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if symptoms worsen, do not improve with treatment, or if new symptoms develop. 4/7/0