

Luke - Treatment at University Hospital Wales, Cardiff

My name is Luke and I would like to share my experience of achalasia with you.

I began experiencing symptoms around the age of 15. I noticed that the food I ate would only travel so far down until I had no choice but to regurgitate. This went on for a few months before I told anyone. After I explained to my parents, I visited my GP on a number of occasions. It was everyone's belief that I was bulimic/ anorexic and there was no way I could convince them otherwise. My parents have always been loving and supportive but I could not get them to see that I was bringing my food back up on purpose. I even questioned myself as to whether I was doing this subliminally. However, this thought was short lived as I knew that I always loved food and didn't care about my weight or image. I weighed around 4 stone by the time I was 16 years old and then found myself being unable to keep fluids down. This started with fizzy drinks and before long I struggled with water. It was at this point that I went back to my GP who considered achalasia.

Tests began with endoscopies and a Barium Swallow. This was when I had the "I told you so" moment. I had two Balloon Dilation procedures, in order to rectify my condition with no joy (I think there were periods of about a week each time when I could swallow fully). I then met the best human being in the world, my surgeon, Mr Simon Huddart. He performed a Heller's Myotomy with Nissen's Fundoplication and I was cured.

I still cannot keep food down without washing it down with fluids (water is best) and I am not on any medication. I am now 34 years old and can remember having one meal where I have eaten and kept the food down without without drink (a hot dog in 2011).

If you have achalasia and are waiting treatment, then believe me, it is worth the wait and it does get better.

Good luck.

Luke