

Achalasia Spasms Survey - August /September 2017

Number in Survey

57

Whilst there were 57 people in the survey not all people completed each section. The questions in the survey were open-ended. Some responses included more than one answer, and some were only partially complete.

Therefore caution should be exercised in drawing statistical conclusions

Please also bear in mind that everyone is different, which is why we had such a variety of answers in our survey.

There may only be one or two things that normally trigger your spasms, but if it is an unknown cause on occasion, looking at the survey might give you an idea of what caused it and what might prevent or alleviate it.

Spasms Suffered:

Yes	40
No	6
Don't Know	11
Total	57

Effects of Surgery:

Better	13
Worse	12
No Difference	6
No Surgery	8
Total	39

Causes/triggers (by frequency)

Stress	21
No obvious cause	16
Over indulging in food	6
Cold air	4
Empty Stomach	4
Bending	3
Very cold water	3
Illness	3
Full Stomach	2
Food Stuck	2
Cold yogurt or ice cream	2
Eating late	2
Run down - colds etc	2
Monthly period	2
Very hot drink	1
Not drunk water for a while	1
Sometimes just a bad patch	1
Lying on left side with legs bent	1
Breakfast	1
Certain food and drink	1
Tomatoes and derivatives	1
Sticky food, e.g. bread and cake	1
Hot chocolate	1
Coffee	1
Red wine	1
White wine	1
Even a little sip of water after eating	1
Very rich foods	1
Chocolate	1
Dry food	1
Coughing or sneezing	1

Tense muscles in trunk or core	1
Tiredness	1
General sluggish digestion	1
Gassy foods causing wind in oesophagus	1

Prevention/ Treatment Techniques. (by frequency)

Sleep more upright	4
Avoid eating too much or too late in the day	4
Focus on breathing	3
Try not to panic	2
Gulp and Burp	2
Relaxing activities, art, music, fishing, meditation, yoga	2
Make life less stressful - change job, talk to friends and family	2
Glass of Water at first sign of spasm	4
Hot water at first sign of spasm	3
Cold water at first sign of spasm	2
Drinking plenty of water with meals	1
Warm water with honey and cinnamon	1
Careful with diet	3
Eat regularly	2
Eating little but often	2
Avoid trigger foods - pasta, pastry, rice, fatty foods, tomatoes, white wine,	3
Avoiding food and drink that's too hot	2
Avoiding food and drink that's too cold	2
Take Manuka honey	3

Avoid gassy food	1
Eat bananas	1
Not drinking too much white wine	1
Drinking actimel	1
Dark chocolate	1
Planning ahead for easy preparation of food	1
Having some relax time before eating	1
Not getting stressed in the kitchen when cooking a meal	1
Not talking too much while eating	1
Walking after meals	1
No exercise for 4/5 hours after meal	1
Nfedipine before bed	1
Hypnotherapy for relaxation	1
Avoid getting cold - wear scarves	2
Try not to get too tired	1

2 people could not take avoiding action as spasms "catch them by surprise"

1 person said nothing helps and they just have to wait until they subside

Pain Alleviators (by frequency)	
Glass of water (or two)	8
Hot water	8
Hot water bottle on site	5
Solid food like snickers bar,toast, dry biscuit, granary bread with butter and honey	4
Drink water as soon as spasm starts	3
Light exercise such as walking	3
Nothing helps - just wait until pain subsides	3
Paracetamol	3
Quiet, controlled breathing	3
Sips of cool, not cold water	3

Deep breaths to internally massage the area	2
Eating	2
Firm massage over sternum	2
Goes away after vomitting/bowel/movement	2
Massage the oesophagus	2
Mindfulness	2
Painkillers	2
Retch over toilet until acid and foam come up	2
Rubbing, pushing or cushion on the hollow area where the rib cage arches up	2
Sips of ice cold water	2
Sitting or standing upright	2
I try my best to burp. Sometimes in the process of burping/trying to burp I'll regurgitate which can help a bit. Occasionally I'll stick my fingers down my throat to induce vomitting, but this is very painful and is a last resort.	1
2/3 pillows under the middle of the back allowing the head to fall right back, so the oesophagus is as elongated as possible, really helps.	1
Banana	1
Codine	1
Cold and warm water	1
Drinking	1
Drinking ginger and lemon tea	1
Drop of Merlot or small cider	1
Fizzy drink can move a food particle, but causes gas	1
Fizzy water	1
Gaviscon	1
Gaviscon + soluble analgesia helps manage the spasm pain	1
Gentle massage of abdomen	1
Glass of milk	1
High strength magnesium and VB taken together	1
I get someone to pat my back between my shoulder blades.	1

I get someone to rub, at the same level where the pain is at the front, near my back bone using a small circular motion and that may result in the food going down and taking the spasm and pain away.	1
I stand up and rest my forehead against a hard surface, then consciously drop my shoulders and try to relax completely. After a minute or so I can then feel the food dropping down to my relief as until then the pain in my chest can be excruciating.	1
Leaning forwards slightly. Only works if I catch the spasm right at the outset.	1
Meditation	1
Nifedipine 5mg, 30 mins before food, twice a day	1
Polos or other mints	1
Slow belly breathing, sitting and relaxing	1
Smoke cannabis	1
Solid food followed by gulps of water	1
Soluble Panadol	1

Pain Area	
Centre of chest	7
Centre of chest radiating to jaw	6
Centre of chest, radiating to back	2
Front of chest - heart level to half way up throat	2
Across diaphragm and behind sternum	2
Pain radiating to arm, jaw & back	2
Starts with tightening feeling in the chest	1
Centre of chest and stomach	1
Centre of chest +sometimes right hand side of stomach or lower left abdomen	1
Starts in oesophagus and radiates to back jaw and ears	1
Left of sternum, and higher up the oesophagus	1
Jaw	1
Right side of throat	1
Pain in spine that moves to the LES	1

Starts with numbness from roof of mouth to top of oesophagus then burning pain across the chest

1

Pain can sometimes feel like acid reflux/ indigestion and can cause difficulty swallowing for several days

Timing

anytime

12

a.m.

2

p.m.

2

night

4

worse in morning

3

worse at night

4

Food association

After meals

11

No association with food

7

Before meals

3

Spasms can be hours after meals 30mins to 8hours later

3

Eating late or having fizzy drinks causes spasms at night

1

Fizzy drink

1

Exercise

No affect

7

Helps ease pain

7

Causes Spasm

4

Helps prevent spasms	4
Walking helps ease the pain	2
Walking fast uphill causes pain	1

Weather	
No affect	11
Cold weather	7
Breathing in cold air	4
Wind, cold and rain	1

Other Comments

I don't get spasms but do get a lot of pain similar to compression or punch to the chest in the location where I have an oesophagus pouch, particularly during and after meals as food goes down and 'nestles' their prior to going into my stomach.

Once I suffer them, it can take quite a few days to get my digestion back again....back to a bland, liquid/soft diet and reintroducing regular foods gradually

Regarding spasms, I actually don't know whether I am experiencing them. I have a permanent feeling of pressure in my upper body, radiating through my upper back, neck, shoulders and arms. I am curious to understand whether this is due to achalasia (potentially spasms), or whether it is heightened by high levels of anxiety and stress or something else like muscular issues. I find as the day progresses, the pressure increases and I experience increasing fatigue. I struggle to keep my anxiety under control, due to worrying about my health and keeping up with my three year old.

I am not sure whether it is acid reflux as well as spasms. It is quite difficult to tell. I have been given lapasole by my GP.

Causes/triggers (by type)

Stress	21
No obvious cause	16
Food:	
Over indulging in food	6
Food Stuck	2
Trigger/ sticky/ dry/ rich foods eg. Tomatoes, chocolate, bread, cake	6
Cold yogurt or ice cream	2
Gassy foods causing wind in oesophagus	1
Drinks:	
Hot chocolate	1
Coffee	1
Red wine	1
White wine	1
Very cold water	3
Very hot drink	1
Timing of eating and drinking:	
Not drunk water for a while	1
Eating Breakfast	1
Empty Stomach	4
Full Stomach	2
Eating late	2
Other:	
Cold air	4
Bending	3
Illness/ run down/ monthly period/ bad patch	8
Lying on left side with legs bent	1

Coughing or sneezing	1
Tense muscles in trunk or core	1
Tiredness	1
General sluggish digestion	1

Whilst most people find drinking water helps one said that even a little sip of water after eating could trigger spasms

Prevention/ Treatment Techniques (by type)	
Sleep Position:	
Sleep more upright	4
Relaxation techniques:	
Focus on breathing	3
Try not to panic	2
Relaxing activities, art, music, fishing, meditation, yoga	2
Make life less stressful - change job, talk to friends and family	2
Hypnotherapy for relaxation	1
Avoid stress before preparing and eating food , plan ahead	3
Drinks:	
Drink Water (hot or cold) at first sign of spasm	9
Drinking plenty of water with meals	1
Warm water with honey and cinnamon	1
Not drinking too much white wine	1
Drinking actimel	1
Diet/ Food:	

Eat regularly/ little but often/ not too late in the day or too much	8
Careful with diet -avoid trigger foods	7
Avoiding food and drink that's too hot or too cold	4
Take Manuka honey	3
Eat bananas	1
Dark chocolate	1
Not talking too much while eating	1
Medicine:	
Nfedipine before bed	1
Other:	
Gulp and Burp	2
Avoid getting cold - wear scarves	2
Try not to get too tired	1
Walking after meals	1
No exercise for 4/5 hours after meal	1

Pain Alleviators (by type)	
Heat	
Hot water bottle	5
Drink	
Drink water, some prefer warm,some hot, some cool, some ice cold	23
Drink water as soon as spasm start	3
Ginger and lemon tea	1
Drop of Merlot or small cider	1
Fizzy drink can move a food particle, (but can cause gas)	2
Glass of milk	1

Food

Eating	2
Solid /dry food	4
Banana	1
Solid food followed by gulps of water	1
Polos or other mints	1

Position/ Exercise

Stand up/ walk around/ light exercise	5
Lean forward	1
I stand up and rest my forehead against a hard surface, then consciously drop my shoulders and try to relax completely.	1
2/3 pillows under the middle of the back allowing the head to fall right back, so the oesophagus is as elongated as possible	1

Massage

Massage area of pain - abdomen/ oesophagus/below ribcage	7
Get someone to rub or pat back	2

Medication

Painkillers - paracetamol/ codeine (some need soluble)	7
Gaviscon	1
Nifedipine 5mg, 30 mins before food, twice a day	1
Soluble Painkillers + gaviscon	1
High strength magnesium and VB taken together	1

Relaxation

Mindfulness/ meditation	3
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Deep/ calm breathing

6

Other

Smoke cannabis

1

Need to burp/ vomit

5

Nothing Helps

3

