

## Patient information

# Globus sensation (globus pharyngeus)

Globus sensation, or globus pharyngeus, is a persistent sensation of a lump in the throat, where swallowing is normal. Some people describe it as a frog in the throat, others as a feeling of the throat being tightly constricted. It is not serious and it is a surprisingly common problem. The sensation may be worse during or following periods of stress. This is not to say that it is a psychiatric problem, rather that there may have been an accumulation of normal life stresses.

Sometimes the globus sensation is aggravated by acid indigestion in the throat.

The following simple steps often alleviate the symptoms and commonly the problem disappears completely.

- If you experience regular acid indigestion (eg heartburn), discuss with your doctor taking an antacid such as Gaviscon®.
- Stop clearing your throat! Many people get into the habit of clearing their throat to try to shift the discomfort. This actually aggravates the throat and will not help the globus. Simply think **before** you are about to clear your throat and then swallow or drink a sip of water instead. If you still have a strong desire to clear your throat then try to yawn or, if necessary, “huff” quietly without using your voice. Tell people that you should not clear your throat; they will love reminding you not to! If you stop throat clearing, your throat will become more comfortable.
- Regular gentle neck and shoulder exercises help to reduce excessive tensions in the muscles of the throat and therefore ease the globus. Try the following several times a day:
  - Start by correcting your posture: think TALL. Imagine a string running up your spine and out of the top of your head, pulling you up to the ceiling. Your shoulders and arms should hang comfortably. Your head should sit easily at the top of your spine – neither poking forward nor pulled back.

- Sit or stand. Shrug your shoulders up to your ears, hold ... then release. Notice that your shoulders are hanging and your neck is long. Repeat.
- Turn your head slowly and gently to the left. Make sure you **don't strain**. Bring your head back to the centre, then bring your chin down to your chest. Raise your head again and turn gently to the right, then back to the centre. Repeat 4 times.
- Let your head drop onto your chest. Keep your mouth slightly open. Feel the stretch at the back of your neck. **Gently and slowly** roll your head in a circle. Repeat in the other direction.
- Relaxing the throat muscles: try the following movements regularly. They should ease the globus.
  - Swallow, with or without a sip of water, when your throat feels uncomfortable.
  - Yawn, with a good open mouth. This is a particularly helpful exercise and you should do this **often**.
  - Exaggerated chewing movements: open your mouth at least two fingers wide between your front teeth. Move your jaw loosely up and down in an exaggerated chewing. Imagine a piece of toffee which grows bigger with every chew.
  - Learn to relax! If you think that you may be doing too much or are feeling a little stressed, try to enjoy some relaxation, some time for yourself, either active relaxation such as swimming or walking, or learn a relaxation method such as yoga. Or, just luxuriate in the bath with no distractions, or listen to music.
  - Drink enough: People often find that their throat is excessively dry. Drink more fluids, eg water, juice, herbal tea. As many as 12 cups a day. Also, moving your tongue across your teeth increases salivation.
  - Breathe steam, either from a bowl of hot water, or by breathing through your mouth and nose in the bath or shower.

If you follow this advice, you should find that the globus sensation disappears.

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

