

# Achalasia

A condition cause by dysfunction of the oesophagus and cardiac sphincter

# Achalasia

- Causes include damage to the nerves of the oesophagus, parasitic infections and familial factors
- Condition is characterised by loss of normal oesophageal peristalsis and failure of the cardiac sphincter to relax
- Risk factors include increasing age
- Incidence 2 in 10000

# Symptoms

- Dysphagia
- Regurgitation of food
- Chest pain that increases after eating
- Pain may radiate to back, neck & arms
- Weight loss
- Haematemesis (Vomiting blood)
- Dyspepsia (Heartburn)
- Drooling
- Cough

# Examination

- Physical examination may reveal signs of anaemia
- Finger clubbing may be present
- Barium swallow reveals absence of peristalsis and failure of cardiac sphincter to relax
- Chest X-ray

# Treatment

- The aim of treatment is to reduce the pressure within the lower oesophagus
- Initially, forcible dilation of the cardiac sphincter is indicated. 85% of patients will respond to this treatment although repeated dilations may be required
- Glyceryl trinitrate and calcium channel blockers may be used to reduce cardiac contraction
- Surgical resection of cardiac sphincter may be required if these methods fail

# Prognosis & Complications

- Successful resolution occurs in approximately 60-85% of patients dependent upon the procedure used

## Complications

- Perforation of oesophagus
- Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease GORD