CANTERBURY
Endoscopy & Gastroenterology

Difficulty Swallowing (Dysphagia): Investigation in Christchurch

Dysphagia is the medical term for difficulty swallowing. It can feel like food is sticking when swallowing.

Difficulty swallowing is considered a "red flag" symptom in gastroenterology. It is important that any new or progressive swallowing issues are investigated promptly to rule out serious underlying conditions. At **Canterbury Endoscopy & Gastroenterology**, we prioritize dysphagia referrals to ensure our Christchurch patients are investigated as quickly as possible.

The Diagnostic Gold Standard: Gastroscopy

To find the cause of dysphagia, a **Gastroscopy** is the most effective tool.
During this procedure at our Christchurch facility, Dr Mehul Lamba uses a thin, flexible camera to inspect the lining of your oesophagus, stomach, and duodenum. We can often perform "therapeutic" actions during the same appointment, such as taking biopsies or even gently dilating (widening) a stricture to provide immediate relief.

Can difficulty in swallowing be due to cancer?

In many cases, dysphagia is caused by benign (non-cancerous) conditions like acid reflux, strictures, or EoE. However, because the symptoms can overlap, a gastroscopy is essential to confirm the cause and provide peace of mind.

Can stress cause swallowing difficulties?

Stress and anxiety can cause a sensation known as "Globus Pharyngeus"—a feeling of a lump in the throat when you aren't eating. However, true dysphagia (where food physically sticks) is usually an organic medical issue that requires physical investigation rather than just stress management.

What should I do if food gets completely stuck?

If you have a "food bolus obstruction" (food is completely stuck and you cannot swallow saliva), this is a medical emergency. You should present to the **Christchurch Hospital Emergency Department** immediately.

What is an "oesophageal dilatation"?

If a narrowing (stricture) is found during your gastroscopy, your doctor can often perform a dilation. This involves using a specialised medical balloon or dilator to gently widen the

narrowed area of the oesophagus. This is a common and effective treatment that can significantly improve your ability to swallow, often can be performed during the same procedure as the initial inspection.

Disclaimer: The information provided on this website is for educational purposes only and is intended to support, not replace, the relationship between a patient and their healthcare professional.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Always seek the advice of a healthcare professional regarding any medical condition or symptoms.