



PATIENT EDUCATION

Late toxicity after esophageal radiation

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

Why late effects can appear

After the lining heals, scar can narrow the tube (stricture). Swallow muscles and nearby lung or heart tissue can show later change if they were in the field. This list is a monitor set. Your surgery, chemo, and dose decide which items apply.

What this sheet is for

Bring it to oncology and GI visits. Food that sticks months later needs a look — do not assume it is 'just radiation' without asking.

Confirm with your care team. New food sticking, coughing with every meal, or vomiting undigested food is a clinic call the same week. Confirm dilation, diet texture, and scan intervals with your care team.

Who usually follows you

- Medical and radiation oncology with imaging as written.
- GI or a swallow clinic if texture has to stay soft.
- Nutrition until weight is stable.



Monitor for (named conditions)

- **Esophageal stricture** — food sticks, you vomit undigested food, or you drop to liquids without a plan.
- **Chronic dysphagia and aspiration** — recurrent pneumonia or a wet voice with meals.
- **Esophageal fistula** (uncommon) — cough with every swallow or recurrent lung infection.
- **Reflux and esophageal ulcer** — night burn, pain, or bleeding.
- **Radiation pneumonitis or lung fibrosis** if a large chest volume was treated.
- **Cardiac strain** after some mediastinal plans — chest pain, swelling, breathlessness.
- **Feeding-tube dependence. Secondary malignancy** (uncommon) in the old field.

Usual surveillance cadence (your letter wins)

- Cancer imaging and endoscopy on the schedule they wrote.
- A dilation plan only if GI recommends it — do not stretch the schedule yourself.
- Weight and texture notes at each visit. Heart-risk care if the chest field was wide.

When to call

- Clinic: food that sticks more than a few days, weight that slides, or a new cough with meals.
- ER or 911: vomiting blood, you cannot swallow saliva, or severe chest pain.

How to schedule or learn more

CureRays Radiation Medicine® 300 Sierra College Drive, Suite 150, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Toll free: (844) CURERAYS / (844) 287-3729 • Office: (530) 802-6400 • office@curerays.com • www.curerays.com

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