



An adult presents with difficulty swallowing and odynophagia after eating dinner.

What is the cause?

Answer: Impacted Fish Bone

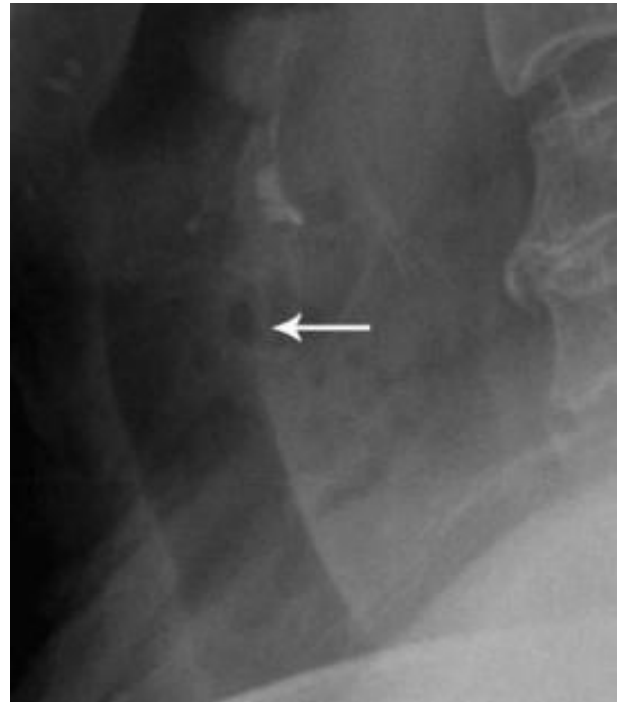
Fish or chicken bones may become impacted in the pharynx or oesophagus and cause symptoms such as dysphagia, odynophagia and foreign body sensation. If untreated they may cause perforation, retropharyngeal abscesses or stricture.

Look in the pharynx and if the bone is visible you may be able to remove it with forceps. If it is not visible an x-ray of the lateral neck should be performed. Note that not all kinds of bone are visible on x-ray, and that they may be obscured by the normal ossification of the thyroid/cricoid cartilages or the hyoid bone.

Readily Visible	Sometimes Visible	Not Visible
Cod	Grey Mullet	Herring
Haddock	Plaice	Kipper
Cole fish	Monkfish	Salmon
Lemon sole	Red snapper	Mackerel
Gurnard		Trout
Chicken		Pike

Complications:

Left: pneumomediastinum due to perforation **Right:** gas within a retropharyngeal abscess



Management:

- If visible refer to ENT for removal via endoscopy.
- If the patient is symptomatic but no bone is visible you should still discuss with ENT. Symptoms may merely be due to an oesophageal scratch as the bone is swallowed but the absence of the bone should be confirmed by endoscopy.