

### **Hiatal Hernia**

Hiatal hernias occur when the stomach elevates through the hiatus and protrudes above the diaphragm. The hiatus is the small opening in the diaphragm which is the large muscle that divides the chest and abdomen. The esophagus passes through this small opening to the stomach. If a hiatal hernia is present it can cause heartburn because acid backs up into the esophagus.

#### **Signs and symptoms that are commonly experienced may include:**

- Regurgitation (acid reflux)
- Heartburn
- Abdominal and chest pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Bleeding (present in sputum, vomit, or stool)

#### **Prevention**

- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Obesity increases the pressure and forces the stomach upwards increasing the risk of developing a hiatal hernia.

#### **Diagnosis**

Hiatal hernias are often diagnosed by a esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD). This is a scope that is inserted down the throat to visualize the tissues and anatomy.

#### **Treatment**

- Various medications can be used to help reduce symptoms, but these will not treat the hernia
  - Surgical treatment can be done to correct the hernia and treat the reflux symptoms such as a Nissen fundoplication the surgeon may use a robot during the surgery. Sometimes an absorbable mesh is placed at the time of the repair.