

“Eos-what??”

Learning About Eosinophilic Gastrointestinal Disease

About Eosinophilic Gastrointestinal Diseases

Eosinophilic gastrointestinal diseases, or EGIDs for short, involve a person’s digestive system and a type of white blood cell called the eosinophil. Eosinophils help our immune system fight off certain invaders and diseases. When someone has an EGID, eosinophils get confused and try to fight off the wrong things by mistake. For many people with EGID, their eosinophils think food is dangerous, so they gather together to fight it.

When a person has too many eosinophils in the esophagus (the stretchy tube that carries food to your stomach when you swallow), stomach, and/or intestines, he or she may have an EGID.

Too many eosinophils may cause tissues and organs to swell and become injured. This can make people who have an EGID feel sick.

EOSINOPHIL



EGID Facts

- ◇ People of all ages can have an EGID.
- ◇ EGIDs are not contagious.
- ◇ People with EGIDs must often stay away from certain foods so that they don’t get sick. Sometimes they have to drink a special liquid to get all of the vitamins and minerals that they need. Some people might use a feeding tube to help get the liquid into their stomach.
- ◇ If a friend tells you that he or she cannot eat a food, don’t pressure or trick your friend into eating it. Please don’t make fun of him or her. People with EGIDs really wish they could eat anything they wanted!
- ◇ There is no cure for EGIDs.

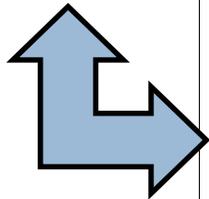
How to Say it

- Eosinophilic = ee-oh-sin-oh-fill-ick
- Esophagitis = ee-soff-a-jiy-tis
- Gastritis = gas-try-tis
- Colitis = cole-eye-tis
- Gastroenteritis = gastro-enter-eye-tis



Why does my friend have to be careful about what he or she eats?

When a person has an EGID, a doctor may tell him or her to stay away from certain foods. This will help the doctor find out which foods might be causing the eosinophils to act the way they do. Your friend may also have a special diet because the doctor has already figured out which foods are a problem.



How can you help a friend who is following a special diet?

- ◇ Spend time with your friend doing activities that you both enjoy that don't involve food.
- ◇ Remember, your friend may get sick if he or she eats or drinks something that is made with an ingredient that he or she can't have. Your friend might not feel sick right away, but eating the wrong foods makes it harder for him or her to stay healthy.
- ◇ Believe your friend when he or she tells you that a food or drink must be avoided, even if it is a food that you have seen him or her eat in the past.
- ◇ Do not share food with your friend, and don't ask him or her to "try just one bite."
- ◇ Do not trick a friend into eating a food just to see what might happen. Your friend might not have symptoms right away, and it can make it harder for the doctor to help your friend to feel better.
- ◇ Be a good friend. Tell an adult if someone bullies or makes fun of him or her. Always talk to an adult if you are worried about your friend's health or something he or she ate.

What is an elemental diet?

Sometimes a person with an EGID must stay away from all, or most, foods in order to get better. If a person cannot eat food, a special liquid is needed to feed him or her. This is called an "elemental diet." In most cases, a person on an elemental diet can drink the liquid like a regular drink. However, some people have a special tube placed in their stomach or nose so that the liquid can get to the stomach without them having to swallow it.

How can you help a friend who is following an elemental diet?

- ◇ Be supportive. Your friend wishes he or she could eat anything that he or she wanted!
- ◇ Understand if your friend doesn't want to hear you talk about how good a food tastes or what you plan to eat for dinner that night.
- ◇ Know that your friend's doctor may allow certain foods, such as some lollipops or sno-cones. These are foods made with simple sugars, which are sometimes allowed on an elemental diet.
- ◇ If your friend has a feeding tube, he or she will "eat" by putting special liquid into the tube. Don't make fun of your friend or ask him or her to go somewhere else to eat.
- ◇ While your friend might eat differently, there are still lots of other things he or she can do. You will find a lot of things in common that don't involve food!

