

# Abstract

**Background:** Phagophobia is a rare disorder and the literature is sparse. There is no specific treatment described for this life threatening condition.

**Case presentation:** The patient is a 25-year-old Sri Lankan female with recurrent difficulty in swallowing. Following her initial episode which lasted one year, she presented to us with inability to swallow for one week. She was dependent on liquids and semisolids. The medical team confidently excluded an organic cause. She had difficulty swallowing solids with behaviours like swallowing with the aid of water and swallowing small boluses. She had difficulty eating in front of a crowd as well. She was preoccupied with misconceptions related to food and gastrointestinal disorders like gastritis. The symptom was soon becoming a maladaptive coping mechanism as it occurred when she was under stress and had difficulty solving a problem. The patient was managed with graded exposure and cognitive techniques.

**Conclusion:** The possibility of a psychological cause for dysphagia should be borne in mind although the occurrence is rare. Although no definitive treatment methods for phagophobia are described, cognitive behavioural techniques can successfully be used in the treatment.