

MetroSouth Surgeon Pioneers Hybrid Treatment of Large Hiatal Hernias and Reflux

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BLUE ISLAND, Ill., July 13, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Chronic reflux patients who also suffer from large hiatal hernias can now get relief in just one visit to the operating room. MetroSouth Medical Center general surgeon Felipe Gracias, MD, Palos Park, is the first physician in Illinois to treat both conditions using a combination of laparoscopic surgery for the hiatal hernia, and an incisionless procedure using an endoscope through the mouth to treat the reflux. In the past, patients with large hiatal hernias (over 2 cm) were not able to treat their reflux with this procedure.

A hiatal hernia is a condition in which a portion of the stomach protrudes upward into the chest, through an opening in the diaphragm. Reflux is a condition in which the valve between the stomach and esophagus (esophageal sphincter) isn't working properly and stomach acids back up into the esophagus, causing heartburn.

Reflux, which often goes hand-in-hand with hiatal hernias, causes heartburn, abdominal pain and in severe cases, regurgitation after eating.

During the first procedure, Dr. Gracias repairs the opening in the diaphragm so the stomach stays in place. In the second phase, he permanently fixes the esophageal valve using a device called the EsophyX, which rides over a video camera down into the stomach where it uses suture-type fasteners to close the esophageal valve. This prevents stomach fluids from backing up into the esophagus. Each procedure takes less than an hour under general anesthesia.

"My patients have been extremely pleased to return to a normal diet and lifestyle," explains Gracias. "They also like the fact that they don't have to return for a second surgery."

"EsophyX is a great solution for my reflux and hiatal hernia patients because it offers them fewer long-term complications, like gas bloat and difficulty swallowing; reduced recovery time and less scarring and pain because the procedure is performed through the mouth," says Gracias.

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