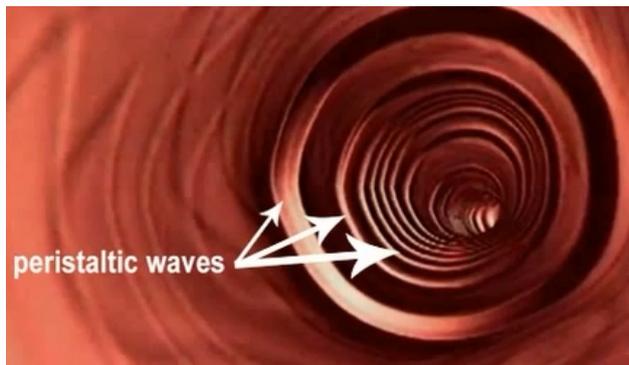


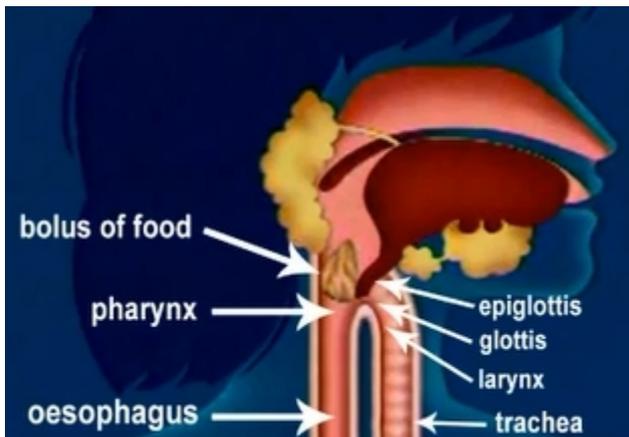
Vomiting

WHAT IS VOMITING?

When we vomit, some of the contents of the stomach are expelled by the mouth. This is a **defence mechanism** in case we swallow toxic substances. Vomiting can be manually triggered, but it is usually a reflex. This reflex first induces a feeling of nausea, or feeling sick, and then the stomach contents are expelled through an **anti-peristaltic movement**.



As mentioned previously, **peristaltic waves** are rhythmic contractions that help food move down through the digestive tract, but when we vomit, the contents of the stomach move up in the opposite direction, which is why we refer to an 'anti-peristaltic' movement.



When we swallow, the **epiglottis** turns down to block the **glottis**, which is the entrance to the larynx. There is a small leaf-shaped flap over the top of the glottis, hence the name epiglottis, from the Greek 'epi' meaning 'upon'.

When we throw up, a reflex closes the **glottis** to prevent the vomit from going into the **trachea** and then the lungs. Vomit typically contains food, along with bile and more rarely blood.

Vomiting is not the same as **regurgitation**, which is a passive action corresponding to the contents of the stomach coming back up towards the back of the throat or the oral cavity.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

As with stomach aches, vomiting can be caused by various things. **Food poisoning** for example, or diseases of the digestive tract, such as a **stomach ulcer** or **gastroenteritis**, which is an inflammation of the wall of the digestive tract. Sometimes vomiting is related to balance functions inside the ear, such as motion sickness or vertigo. Side effects of certain **medication** may also trigger vomiting.