

both the thoracic esophagus and the LES. A dominant manifestation of this, absent peristalsis, refers to either the complete absence of swallow-induced contraction (absent contractility) or the presence of nonperistaltic, disordered contractions. Absent peristalsis and failure of deglutitive LES relaxation are the defining features of achalasia. In diffuse esophageal spasm (DES), LES function is normal, with the disordered motility restricted to the esophageal body. Absent contractility combined with severe weakness of the LES is a pattern commonly found in patients with scleroderma.

APPROACH TO THE PATIENT

Dysphagia

Figure 44-2 shows an algorithm for the approach to a patient with dysphagia.

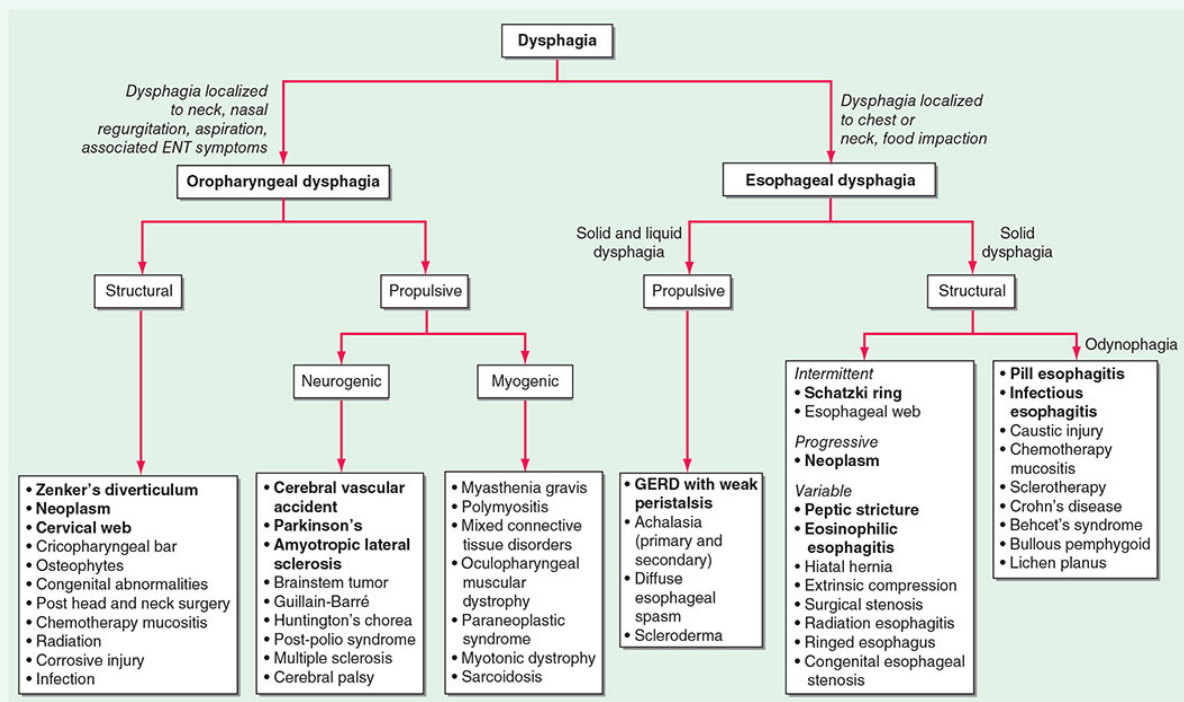


FIGURE 44-2 Approach to the patient with dysphagia. Etiologies in bold print are the most common. ENT, ear, nose, and throat; GERD, gastroesophageal reflux disease.

HISTORY