

# Health Journal July 2016

## Stomach ache & Abdominal pain

**A stomach ache is a term often used to refer to cramps or a dull ache in the tummy. It's usually short-lived and is often not serious.**

**Severe abdominal pain is a greater cause for concern. If it starts suddenly and unexpectedly, it should be regarded as a medical emergency, especially if the pain is concentrated in a particular area.**

### Stomach cramps with bloating

Stomach cramps with bloating are often caused by trapped wind. This is a very common problem that can be embarrassing, but is easily dealt with.

### Sudden stomach cramps with diarrhea

If your stomach cramps have started recently and you also have diarrhea, the cause may be a tummy bug. This means gastroenteritis you have a viral or bacterial infection of the stomach and bowel, which should get better without treatment after a few days. Gastroenteritis may be caused by coming into close contact with someone who's infected, or by eating contaminated.

### Food poisoning

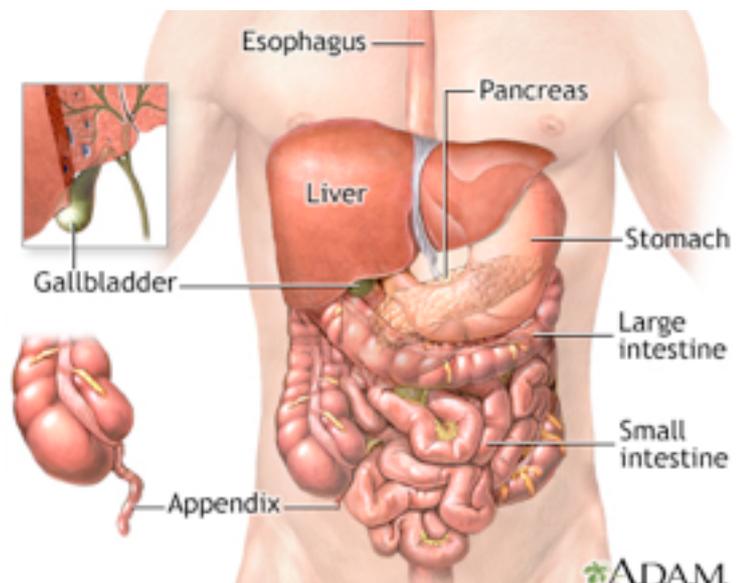
If you have repeated bouts of stomach cramps and diarrhea, you may have a long-term condition, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

### Sudden severe abdominal pain

If you have sudden agonising pain in a particular area of your tummy, it is advised to go to your nearest A&E. It may be a sign of a serious problem that could rapidly get worse without treatment

Serious causes of sudden severe abdominal pain include:

- **Appendicitis**– the swelling of the appendix (a finger-like pouch connected to the large intestine), which causes agonising pain in the lower right-hand side of abdomen, and means the appendix will need to be removed



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- A bleeding or perforated stomach ulcer – a bleeding, open sore in the lining of your stomach or duodenum (the first part of the small intestine)
- Acute cholecystitis– inflammation of the gallbladder, which is often caused by gallstones, in many cases, your gallbladder will need to be removed
- Kidney stones– small stones may be passed out in your urine, but larger stones may block the kidney tubes, and you'll need to go to hospital to have them broken up
- Diverticulitis– inflammation of the small pouches in the bowel that sometimes requires treatment with antibiotics

Sometimes, abdominal pain may occur due to a problem somewhere else in your body, such as your chest or pelvic area. For example, you may have abdominal pain if you have:

- Severe menstrual cramps
- Endometriosis
- Muscle strain
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
- Tubal (ectopic) pregnancy
- Urinary tract infections

## Home Care

You can try the following home care steps to ease mild abdominal pain:

- Sip water or other clear fluids. You may have sports drinks in small amounts. People with diabetes must check their blood sugar often and adjust their medicines as needed
- Avoid solid food for the first few hours
- If you have been vomiting, wait 6 hours, and then eat small amounts of mild foods such as rice, applesauce, or crackers. Avoid dairy products
- If the pain is high up in your abdomen and occurs after meals, feeling heartburn or indigestion. Avoid citrus, high-fat foods, fried or greasy foods, tomato products, caffeine, alcohol and carbonated beverages

These additional steps may help prevent some types of abdominal pain:

- Drink plenty of water each day
- Eat small meals more frequently
- Exercise regularly
- Limit foods that produce gas
- Make sure that your meals are well-balanced and high in fiber. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables



## Food & Drinks to avoid

### Dairy

Dairy products such as milk and cheese top the list of "don't" foods when it comes to upset stomachs. As more than half the world's population is already lactose intolerant, meaning they lack the necessary enzyme to digest dairy products

Even if you're not lactose intolerant, a viral or bacterial infection can affect lactase (the lactose-digesting enzyme) and could cause you to temporarily or even permanently lose your ability to digest lactose

### Soda

Although many people attribute soda's aggravating qualities to the carbonation, it is also the citric acid and the preservative sodium benzoate

The carbonation can also bother some people, it can give you a full feeling and if you have an upset stomach and you're burping a lot and feeling full, that can be a problem

### Chocolate & caffeine

One of the main reasons caffeine and chocolate (which may contain caffeine) are irritating to an already-upset tummy is that, like peppermint tea, they relax the lower esophageal sphincter, which allows acid reflux

Caffeine can also loosen stools, which isn't good if you already have diarrhea. And chocolate that contains milk products or nuts could be difficult to digest for those who are lactose-intolerant or allergic

### Fatty foods

Cream, fatty meats, soft cheese, full fat milk: All of these foods are high in fat and won't help if you're feeling sick to your stomach. That's because fatty foods activate chemical receptors in the stomach in such a way as to slow down emptying of the stomach, making you feel bloated. Other high-fat foods such as nuts will make you feel full. That may be good if you're trying to lose weight, but not so great if you're feeling awful

### Alcohol

Alcohol can exacerbate gastric acidity. It contains chemicals that are hard to metabolize, irritate the stomach lining, and maybe a particular problem for those who already have difficulties with their liver. People with liver problems shouldn't be drinking large amounts of alcohol and anyone with stomach problems would be advised to stay away as well