

INDIGESTION

(Dyspepsia)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Indigestion is the term used to describe chest or abdominal discomfort following meals. The medical term is dyspepsia. Almost everyone will experience indigestion at one time or another. Some people have it every day, others may have it occasionally.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Mild nausea.
- Upset stomach.
- Upper abdominal discomfort.
- Gas or belching.
- Bloating or full feeling.
- Stomach may feel full soon after starting a meal.
- Acid taste in the mouth.

CAUSES

There may be excess stomach acid produced, problems with motility (movement of food through the digestive system), irritation of the stomach lining, or an increase in gas. A bacterial infection with *Helicobacter pylori* may also be involved. A number of risk factors are known to lead to indigestion.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Eating too much and eating too quickly.
- Eating food with a high fat content.
- Poor digestion of gas-forming foods such as beans, cucumbers, cabbage, turnips, and onions.
- Smoking.
- Drinking too much alcohol.
- Lactose intolerance.
- Stress or anxiety.
- Some drugs can irritate the stomach lining. These include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (such as aspirin or ibuprofen), iron supplements, antibiotics, and others.
- Swallowing too much air when chewing.
- Exercising right after eating.
- Food allergy.
- Pregnancy.
- Overweight.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Follow guidelines listed under Treatment.
- Avoid risk factors where possible.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Indigestion is very common and is usually nothing to worry about. Symptoms can be controlled, but recurrence is likely.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Indigestion usually does not cause complications. It can occasionally be a symptom of another disorder that could be more serious.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Most people will self-treat this disorder. If symptoms persist or cause concern, see your health care provider. A physical exam may be done and questions asked about your symptoms. Medical tests may sometimes be needed to check for other disorders.
- Treatment and prevention are similar. Follow the steps listed here to help relieve the symptoms.
 - Eat slowly. Chew food carefully and completely.
 - Don't smoke right before or during a meal.
 - Relax after meals, but don't lie down.
 - Avoid excitement or exercise right after a meal.
 - Avoid situations that make you swallow air, such as chewing gum, or drinking carbonated drinks.
 - Avoid tight clothing.
 - Avoid foods you don't digest well.
 - Avoid emotional problems during meals.
 - Place blocks under the head of your bed to raise it a few inches.
 - Avoid nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Ask your health care provider about other options.

MEDICATIONS

- You may use nonprescription antacids to neutralize the stomach acid. Use H2 antagonists (such as cimetidine or ranitidine) or proton pump inhibitors (such as omeprazole) to reduce stomach acid.
- Stronger drugs may be prescribed if needed.

ACTIVITY

No limits. Daily exercise (such as 30 minute walk) helps promote good health. Don't exercise right after a meal.

DIET

Eat small meals. Don't eat near bedtime. Avoid foods that cause discomfort. Eat slowly; don't gulp food. Avoid alcohol or caffeine on an empty stomach. Lose weight, if you are overweight.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of indigestion that persist, are severe, or cause concern.
- Other symptoms occur along with indigestion, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, or rapid weight loss.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page