

Indigestion



Knowledge is Power - Quality health care starts with You

Indigestion, also known as upset stomach or dyspepsia, is discomfort or a burning feeling in the upper abdomen, often accompanied by nausea, abdominal bloating, belching, and sometimes vomiting.

Causes

Indigestion can be caused by a disease in the digestive tract, but for many people, it results from eating too much, eating too quickly, eating high-fat foods, or eating during stressful situations.

Smoking, drinking too much alcohol, using medications that irritate the stomach lining, being tired, and having ongoing stress can also cause indigestion or make it worse.

Some people have persistent indigestion that is not related to any of these factors. This type of indigestion - called functional or nonulcer dyspepsia - may be caused by a problem in the muscular squeezing action of the stomach (motility).

Diagnosis

To diagnose indigestion, the doctor may perform tests for problems, like ulcers. In the process of diagnosis, a person may have x-rays of the stomach and small intestine, or an endoscopy, in which the doctor uses an instrument to look at the inside of the stomach.

Treatment

Avoiding the foods and situations that seem to cause indigestion is, in some cases, the most successful way to treat it. Excess stomach acid does not usually cause or result from indigestion, so antacids are not an appropriate treatment, although some people report that they

do help. Smokers can help relieve their indigestion by quitting smoking, or at least not smoking right before eating. Exercising with a full stomach may cause indigestion, so scheduling exercise before a meal or at least an hour afterward might help.

To treat indigestion caused by a functional problem in the digestive tract, the doctor may prescribe medicine that affects stomach motility.

Points to Remember

Because indigestion can be a sign of, or mimic a more serious disease, people should see a doctor if they have:

- vomiting, weight loss, or appetite loss
- black tarry stools or blood in vomit
- severe pain in the upper right abdomen
- discomfort unrelated to eating
- indigestion accompanied by shortness of breath, sweating, or pain radiating to the jaw, neck, or arm

Additional Digestive Topics

- Celiac Disease
- Colon Cancer
- Constipation
- Crohn's Disease
- Diarrhea
- Gas in Digestive Tract
- Gastro Reflux Disease
- Heartburn
- Hepatitis C
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Probiotics
- Ulcerative Colitis