

Indigestion

What is indigestion?

Indigestion, also called upset stomach or dyspepsia, is a discomfort or burning feeling in the upper part of your belly. Besides pain you may have nausea, bloating, belching, and sometimes vomiting. Indigestion is common in adults, but it is rarely a serious health problem.

What is the cause?

Usually indigestion happens because you ate too much or too fast, or you ate when you were feeling stressed or very tired. It can also happen if you eat too late in the day, or if you eat and then lie down. Some medicines, foods, or alcohol may cause indigestion or make it worse. And sometimes indigestion is caused by an infection or other disease.

How is it treated?

Here are ways that might help you have indigestion less often:

- Avoid the foods and drinks that seem to bother your stomach. Foods and drinks that are more likely to cause indigestion are high-fat or spicy foods, wine, carbonated drinks, and drinks with caffeine.
- Avoid aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, because they can upset your stomach. If you need to take these pain-relief medicines, taking them with food may help. The pain reliever acetaminophen (Tylenol) is usually easier on the stomach.
- Do not smoke, especially before eating.
- Do not exercise or bend over on a full stomach.
- Avoid clothes with tight waistbands.
- Try to avoid stressful situations before or during meals.
- Allow enough time for eating so you can chew your food carefully and not feel rushed.

If you have indigestion just once in a while, you may try treating it with antacids. You can get them as liquids or pills without a prescription at drug or grocery stores. Take them according to the package directions.

If you have indigestion nearly every day for 2 weeks, see your healthcare provider. You may need medical tests to see if there is another cause for the problem. If no serious cause, such as an ulcer, can be found, your healthcare provider may recommend diet changes or medicines to help.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your provider if:

- You start having indigestion more often.

- You have a stomachache that is constant or keeps coming back.
- You have an unexpected loss of weight.
- You are vomiting dark or bloody vomit
- You have dark, tarry-looking or bloody bowel movements.
- Your skin or eyes look yellow.
- You have symptoms of indigestion that are not related to eating.

Most of the time indigestion is not caused by anything serious. However, a heart attack can sometimes start out with the symptoms like indigestion.

If you have jaw, arm, shoulder, chest, or back pain; sweating; nausea; shortness of breath; lightheadedness; or anxiety with your indigestion; call 911 for emergency care.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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