

# Upset Stomach: 5 Common Digestive Problems and how to Solve them

An upset stomach is more correctly called an intestinal (gut) disorder because most of the food is digested there. We will figure out what disrupts digestion and how to deal with burning, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, and colic.

This and other articles will help you learn more about unpleasant symptoms, but will not replace your doctor's visit!



## Content

1. Heartburn
2. Bloating
3. Constipation
4. Diarrhea
5. Abdominal pain

## 1. Heartburn

### *Symptoms*

Heartburn is an unpleasant burning sensation in the chest area, sometimes accompanied by a sour taste in the mouth and belching. It is normal to experience heartburn after a hearty dinner, but with a constant burning sensation in the esophagus.

### *Why does it occur?*

With heartburn, the stomach contents are partially thrown back into the esophagus. Persistent heartburn is gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). It can accompany gastritis, gastroduodenitis, peptic ulcer, dyspepsia, irritable bowel syndrome, dysbacteriosis, and other pathologies.

Burning can also occur after:

- coffee;
- cigarettes;
- soda;
- alcohol;
- fatty meat food;
- dry snack;
- spicy dishes;
- fruit juice.

Being overweight and pregnant can also cause heartburn.

### *How to solve the problem*

To avoid the reflux of gastric juice into the esophagus, it is better not to lie down, jump or bend over for a couple of hours after eating. It is also essential to improve nutrition to maintain your microbiome, do not overeat, and do not lean on spicy food.

You can get rid of heartburn at home with the help of antacids – they instantly “extinguish” the attack. This is a conventional approach that is warranted short-term. Unfortunately, antacids are used way too often and do not solve the root cause of heartburn. It is akin a bandaid – once the bandaid falls off – there will be bigger issues and worse symptoms that were covered up by the bandaid.

A gastroenterologist also may prescribe proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs) or H2-histamine receptor blockers for persistent

heartburn. They slow down the production of hydrochloric acid (stomach acid) by the cells of the stomach. Even though PPIs can be bought over the counter, you should not take them longer than 2 weeks two courses a year. Taking PPIs long-term may cause brittle bones, higher risk of other gut infections, including but not limited by *C.diff* which is a nasty gut bacteria that may cause death.

If heartburn torments you constantly, a gastroenterologist can do an endoscopy of the stomach (EGD) – this procedure will accurately show whether the mucous membrane is inflamed. At the same time, the results may be insignificant with no pathology present even though the symptoms persist. In this case, functional medicine approach may be very useful: getting to the root cause of the disease will help to get rid of the symptoms.

## **2. Bloating**

### *Symptoms*

Bloating is flatulence. The stomach increases in volume, and becomes rigid. Sometimes you can feel the movement of gases in the intestines, seething and rumbling. When there is a lot of gas in the gut, cramping may persist.

### *Why does it occur?*

A small amount of gas in the intestines is normal. If bloating is noticeable to you and others, interferes with sports, and causes discomfort, then this is already excessive gas formation.

A common cause of bloating is that a person eats a lot of fast food and avoids whole foods, and plant foods. A combo of a burger, fries, and soda can cause stomach heaviness, fermentation, and constipation because there aren't enough enzymes and fiber to digest it all and get it out of the body.

There is another reason for bloating – food intolerance. Many plant and dairy products contain FODMAP carbohydrates, which serve as food for gut bacteria and lead to increased gas production. Often the cluster of symptoms are called “Irritable Bowel Syndrome” (IBS).

#### *How to solve the problem*

With severe bloating, it is better to stand up and move around to help the gases leave the gut. A sitting posture will only worsen the condition – the intestines are pinched in it. During this period, it is better to choose loose clothing.

Peppermint tea and other warm drinks can also relieve discomfort.

If you eat healthy but still suffer from bloating, try identifying your trigger foods with the FODMAP diet and cutting them out. I suggest to my clients a low-FODMAP diet for 2 weeks to see if there is any improvement.

### **3. Constipation**

#### *Symptoms*

More than two days of fecal retention is constipation. It is usually accompanied by a feeling of incomplete emptying and heaviness in the abdomen. The stool becomes denser, you have to push hard and for a long time. Constipation can be temporary or chronic.

#### *Causes*

Lack of fiber and water in the diet makes feces hard, making going to the toilet more difficult. The situation is complicated by a sedentary lifestyle, in which peristalsis slows down.

Stress, depression, side effects of certain medications, and comorbidities can also cause constipation. Other reasons are

haste and reluctance to use public toilets, which makes it necessary to restrain the urge.

#### *How to solve the problem*

Prunes, flax seeds, psyllium (psyllium husk), and prebiotics (inulin, etc.) are natural laxatives. Caffeine also stimulates peristalsis (the movement of fecal matter through the intestines).

Constipation is best prevented – eating a variety of fiber (fruits, vegetables, herbs, legumes, and mushrooms), eating regularly and at about the same time, drinking more water helps.

Fiber absorbs water – feces pass through the digestive tract more easily. It is also important to move more during the day and not put off going to the toilet.

Nevertheless, IF fiber makes your symptoms worse – please, do not hesitate to try a low-FODMAP diet approach and see if you may need to get testing for SIBO (Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth).

## **4. Diarrhea**

### *Symptoms*

With diarrhea, you have to go to the toilet more than three times a day, and the stool becomes loose, and unformed, often with undigested food particles. In this case, the body loses water and electrolytes. Distinguish between acute and chronic diarrhea.

### *Causes*

The leading causes of diarrhea are food poisoning and intestinal infections. There is also traveler's diarrhea caused by the ingestion of new species of E. coli for the body.

Loose stools may be due to dysbacteriosis. When pathogenic bacteria take precedence over beneficial ones, the intestinal mucosa and its ability to digest food and synthesize vitamins suffer. Also, many gases are formed that interfere with the normal formation of feces.

Chronic diarrhea often affects people with irritable bowel syndrome, celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, pancreatitis, folate deficiency anemia, or lactose intolerance. Also, the cause of regular diarrhea can be a violation of the intestinal microflora.

#### *How to solve the problem*

You need to drink plenty of water and take gel-like sorbents – they bind and remove toxic substances from the body more efficiently than activated charcoal. Medications like loperamide inhibit peristalsis but do not solve the problem, so they can be relied on only in emergency cases. If diarrhea lasts a day or longer, you need to restore the water-salt balance with rehydration agents.

If diarrhea does not go away after 4-5 days, you need to call a doctor. The same should be done if the diarrhea is accompanied by fever, vomiting, or blood in the stool.

## **5. Abdominal pain**

### *Symptoms*

When they say that the stomach hurts, they usually mean colic and spasms. They can be barely perceptible, or they can twist the stomach. In this case, the abdomen is generally swollen or tense. It is from such colic that babies often wake up and cry.

### *Causes*

One possible reason is flatulence. Excess gas stretches the walls of the intestine and thereby causes pain when moving

along the tract. People with sensitive bowels are especially susceptible to this pain.

Also, the stomach can hurt due to stress or a disturbed daily routine, in which you have to chaotically snack or endure hunger, and then eat up late at night.

Another reason is inflammation of the intestinal mucosa caused by stomach flu or another infection. Colic and spasms can also result from a chronic illnesses such as gastroparesis, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, or liver damage.

In babies, there can be several reasons for colic: the emerging microflora, lack of enzymes, increased intestinal sensitivity, intolerance to the formula for feeding, and swallowing air.

#### *How to solve the problem*

Pain is relieved by antispasmodics that completely or selectively relax the smooth muscles of the intestine. A warm heating pad on the abdomen may help, but only if the cause of the abdominal pain is known and not inflammation. With colic in a baby, parents should keep a diary of colic and the child's nutrition in order to establish the cause.

If other symptoms of indigestion accompany the pain, you do not need to drown it out – immediately contact a gastroenterologist.

These digestive problems can be solved by changing the contents of your plate. The right products will help improve the microflora composition and get rid of discomfort.

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