

Stomach Complaints

DIARRHEA

Anyone with diarrhea knows the abdominal pain, bloating, cramping feelings that are often brought on by frequent loose or watery stools.

Many foods can cause diarrhea, such as dairy products, caffeine, alcohol, and greasy, fatty or spicy foods. Some foods that are better tolerated are bananas, boiled potatoes, cooked carrots, cooked chicken, plain rice, toast and applesauce.

Diarrhea Treatment

Adding fiber to your diet can help control watery diarrhea as it helps make watery stool more formed and constipated stool softer.

If your diarrhea is caused by a bacterial or parasitic infection, you may need antibiotics.

There are many choices for over-the counter products like Imodium AD® or Kaopectate® that can reduce symptoms but don't speed healing.

It's time to see your health care provider if there is blood or pus in the stool, you experience black, tarry stools, diarrhea persists longer than 3 days, is accompanied by a fever of 102° or above, you experience severe abdominal or rectal pain, or there are signs of dehydration (decreased urination, decreased sweating, increase in heart rate and breathing rate, muscle cramps and headaches).

CONSTIPATION

Constipation refers to difficulty in emptying the bowels, with dry, hard stools often noted, and is usually brought on by a lack of dietary fiber, water and exercise. Some medications can also be a factor.



Constipation can also occur in small children when they ignore the urge to pee.

Daily exercise and drinking more water will help relieve constipation. Other changes to your diet such as increasing dietary fiber to at least 40 grams a day, and eliminating dairy products or choosing dairy alternatives are known to be helpful as well.

Help small children get into a regular routine so he/she doesn't resist the urge to go (after meals is a good time to sit on the toilet for 5-10 minutes).

See your health care provider if the level of constipation prevents you from participating in normal activities, lasts longer than 3 weeks without significant relief, or you have not had a bowel movement for a few days longer than normal.

This report was compiled by Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Inc. (ACHS) clinical staff for informational purposes, and does not replace any advice one might receive from a qualified health care provider.

Stomach Complaints



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*Heartburn, Nausea,
Diarrhea & Constipation
Management*



**Ammonoosuc
Community Health Services, Inc.**

Founded in 1975, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services is a nonprofit community health center offering a network of quality, affordable primary health services. Our programs promote and support the well-being of individuals and families by emphasizing preventive care and encouraging active participation in one's own health. ACHS serves 26 towns in northern Grafton and southern Coos counties and has sites located in Littleton, Franconia, Whitefield, Warren and Woodsville. We provide comprehensive services, regardless of one's ability to pay, to nearly 10,000 patients.



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Heartburn, Nausea, Diarrhea and Constipation Management

Many people suffer with digestive difficulties, and spend millions of dollars each year on both prescription medications and visits to their doctor's office to address a myriad of stomach problems. Many of these problems can be addressed by making informed lifestyle changes or taking over-the-counter remedies instead of prescription drugs.

Getting regular exercise, drinking plenty of water, and eating a fiber-rich diet (at least 40 grams/day for adults), and reducing or eliminating processed foods, alcohol, tobacco and caffeine are all beneficial for a healthier you and will help keep many of these problems from occurring in the first place.

Many stomach issues can be caused by high stress levels. Relaxation practices like yoga, meditation, prayer, breathing exercises, massage, or guided imagery can be effective ways to reduce or prevent stress.

Always talk to your provider about any medications you are taking that might contribute to your symptoms, as well as any which might help if you take them.

Maintaining "good bacteria" in your digestive system is very helpful in managing many stomach complaints. Taking a *probiotic* supplement or consuming cultured yogurt or other fermented foods can provide good bacteria and should be considered part of your diet to keep the digestive system healthy.

If you still need occasional help with common stomach ailments, the following information may be helpful.



Making lifestyle changes for a healthier you can lessen the occurrence of common stomach issues. Daily exercise, drinking plenty of water, and making smart food choices support a healthier lifestyle.

"GERD" (HEARTBURN)

GERD (gastroesophageal reflux) is a burning sensation in the chest caused when stomach acid travels backward up the esophagus (food pipe), causing irritation. Many things can contribute to GERD symptoms, especially obesity, pregnancy, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, overeating and eating too close to bedtime.

Along with avoiding these contributing factors,



keeping a journal to identify patterns of what might be causing your GERD symptoms may be helpful. Other ideas for managing GERD symptoms include:

Try using bricks/blocks/boards to raise the head of your bed a few inches above the foot of the bed (stacking pillows under your head can actually make GERD symptoms worse).

Some herbal supplements such as slippery elm and deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL) may help manage heartburn. Over-the-counter medications such as calcium carbonate (TUMS®), ranitidine (Zantac®) and omeprazole (Prilosec®) can also help but ask the advice of a health care

provider before regular or long term use.

NAUSEA

Although nausea can be a symptom of more serious health conditions, the usual causes of nausea are a persistent stomach virus, pregnancy, food poisoning, drug overdose, concussion, overeating and migraine. Taking too many supplements at once or too high a dose can also make a person feel a bit queasy.

Managing Nausea

Try small, protein rich meals every two hours to keep up strength. Eating a protein-rich snack before bed is important to lessen the next morning's nausea.

For pregnancy-related nausea, try products made with *real* ginger, acupressure bands, or talking to your doctor about taking extra vitamin B6.

Drinking liquids between meals instead of with them can help lessen symptoms of nausea.

Persistent nausea over 1-2 weeks, weight loss, vomiting, inability to eat, or nausea that gets worse over time are all reasons to see a health care provider.

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