



INDIGESTION: WHAT YOU CAN DO

Indigestion refers to symptoms in your upper gastrointestinal tract, a part of your digestive system that includes the esophagus (the tube running from your mouth to your stomach), stomach and duodenum (the stomach's opening to the bowel). These symptoms are usually called dyspepsia (dis-PEP-see-ah), which means "bad digestion"

What are the main symptoms of dyspepsia?

Pain and discomfort in the upper abdomen. Other symptoms can include nausea, bloating, feeling full quickly while eating, heartburn (a burning pain rising from your stomach or lower chest toward your neck). These symptoms can be changed by eating or having an empty stomach.

What causes dyspepsia?

Many things can cause dyspepsia, including:

- T a stomach ulcer—a sore or break in the lining of the stomach
- T acid reflux disease—stomach acid backs up into the esophagus, causing heartburn
- T certain medications, such as aspirin
- T pregnancy
- T poor eating/drinking habits
- T in rare cases, stomach cancer

In some people, no cause for dyspepsia can be found.

Is dyspepsia a serious condition?

It can be. So, if you frequently have any of the symptoms listed above, be sure to see your doctor.

This is especially important if you:

- T are over 50 years of age
- T have recently lost weight without trying
- T have trouble swallowing
- T have severe vomiting
- T have black, tarry bowel movements

How is dyspepsia treated?

Once your doctor has made sure that your symptoms aren't caused by a serious disease, you will probably need to take a medication that stops acid being made. You might also need to be tested and treated for *Helicobacter pylori* (an infection in your body that causes most ulcers).

If your symptoms don't go away, your doctor might send you for an endoscopy (a small tube with a camera attached is put into your mouth and down into your stomach). This will allow the doctor to look inside your stomach to find the cause of your symptoms.

Can I do anything to treat dyspepsia?

Yes, there are several things you can do to help reduce your symptoms:

- T if you smoke, stop
- T avoid certain foods or drinks that bother your stomach (e.g., coffee, chocolate, spicy foods)
- T reduce stress in your life
- T don't lie down right after you eat
- T raise the head of your bed by placing two blocks under the legs of the bed when you sleep