

# Stomachache and Stomach upset



Pediatric & Neonatology Department

## What happens when you have a stomachache?

When you have a stomachache, you have pain or discomfort in your belly. Sometimes that's the only symptom you have. Other times, you can have other symptoms such as:

- Burning in your chest known as heartburn
- Burping
- Bloating (feeling like your belly is filled with air)
- Feeling full too quickly when you start eating



Should I see a doctor or nurse about my stomachache?

Most people do not need to see a doctor or nurse for a stomachache. But you should see your doctor or nurse if:

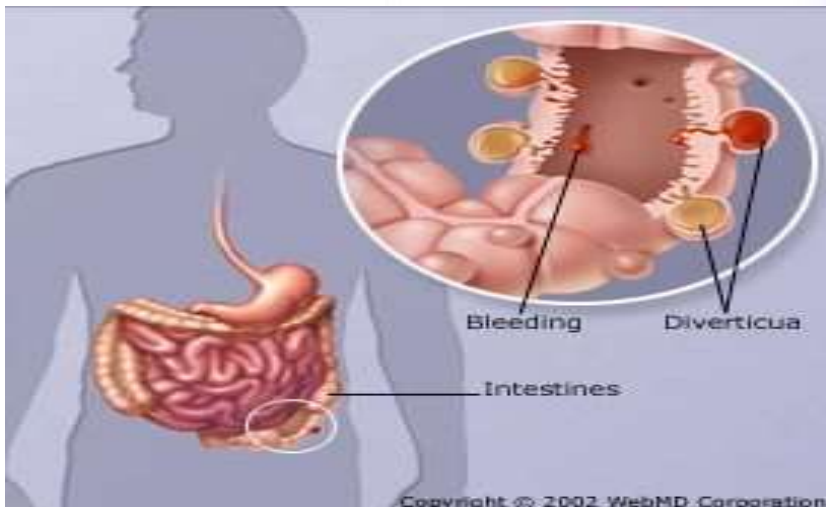
- You have bloody bowel movements, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- Your pain is severe and lasts more than an hour or comes and goes for more than 24 hours.
- You cannot eat or drink for hours.
- You have a fever higher than 102°F (39°C).
- You lose a lot of weight without trying to, or lose interest in food.



## What causes stomachaches?

In some cases, stomachaches are caused by a specific problem, such as:

- A stomach ulcer, which is a sore on the inside of the stomach
- A condition called "diverticulitis," in which small pouches in your large intestine get infected



In other cases, doctors do not know what causes stomachaches or the other symptoms that happen with them. Even so, there are usually ways to treat the symptoms of stomachache.

## What treatments help with stomach symptoms?

If your symptoms are caused by a specific problem, such as an ulcer, treating that problem will likely relieve your symptoms. But if your doctor or nurse does not know what is causing your pain, they might recommend medicines that

reduce the amount of acid in your stomach. These medicines often relieve stomachache and the symptoms that come with it. Some of these medicines are available without a prescription.

## Can I do anything on my own to prevent stomachache?

Yes. The foods you eat and the way you eat them can have a big effect on whether or not you feel pain.

To lower your chances of getting a stomachache:

- Avoid fatty foods, such as red meat, butter, fried foods, and cheese
- Eat a bunch of small meals each day, rather than 2 or 3 big meals
- Stay away from foods that seem to make your symptoms worse
- Avoid taking over-the-counter medicines that seem to make your symptoms worse – Examples include aspirin or ibuprofen.



Some people – especially kids – sometimes get a stomachache after drinking milk or eating cheese, ice cream, or other foods that have milk in them. They have a problem called "lactose intolerance," which means that they cannot fully break down foods that have milk in them.

People with lactose intolerance can avoid problems caused by milk if they take something called lactase. Lactase (sample brand name: Lactaid) helps your body break down milk. Some foods come with it already added.



If your stomachache seems to be related to constipation, meaning that you do not have enough bowel movements, you might need more fiber, or a medicine called a laxative. (Laxatives are medicines that increase the number of bowel movements you have.)

Taking in a lot of fiber helps to increase the number of bowel movements you have. You can get more fiber by:

- Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Taking fiber pills, powders, or wafers

### Is a stomachache the same for children as it is for adults?

In general, yes. Children get stomachaches for most of the same reasons that adults do. But in children, stomach pain is often triggered by stress or anxiety. For them, it's especially important to pay attention to psychological or emotional problems that might be making pain worse.

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