



Abdominal Pain Discharge Information

What is abdominal pain?

Abdominal pain is aching or cramping in your belly. The abdomen, or belly, is the area between the chest and the pelvis. The pain can range from mild discomfort to cramping or severe pain.

Many things can cause abdominal pain and it can sometimes be hard to know the exact cause of the pain. Examples of some of the common causes of pain in the abdomen are:

- Indigestion or heartburn
- Stomach flu
- Food poisoning
- Food allergy
- Stress and anxiety
- Gastritis (an irritation of the stomach lining)
- Constipation
- Menstruation
- Ulcers
- Hernia
- Urinary tract infection
- Diseases of the intestine
- Pancreatitis
- Liver problems
- Disease or infection in the uterus

Sometimes abdominal pain is caused by a problem in another part of the body, such as the lungs or the heart. For example, a heart attack can cause upper abdominal pain.

You cannot always tell how serious the cause is from the severity of the pain. Mild conditions such as gas or stomach flu may cause severe pain, while more serious problems, such as cancer, may cause relatively mild pain.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on the cause of your abdominal pain, the treatment you need, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Relieve gas and bloating
 - Treat pain
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Treat or prevent nausea or constipation
 - Reduce the acid in your stomach to help relieve acid indigestion
- If you have had abdominal surgery, to care for your incision:
 - Keep your incision clean.
 - If you are told to change your dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

Appointments

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments.
- Keep appointments for any routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines or muscle relaxants.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.

- Put a heating pad set at low or a covered hot water bottle on your belly or take a warm bath to relieve discomfort.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.

Call emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:

Abdominal pain with:

- Jaw, arm, shoulder, chest, or back pain
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Anxiety

If you have any of these symptoms, do not drive yourself.

Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:

- Abdominal pain that goes away and then comes back worse than it was
- Abdominal pain that:
 - Usually happens 12 to 24 hours after a large meal or heavy drinking
 - Is steady and sharp
 - Gets worse when you move
 - Feels better when you sit or lean forward
 - Makes you vomit
- Change in bowel habits, such as pain, mucus, diarrhea, constipation, or other intestinal problems
- Pain or burning with urination
- Urgent need to urinate often
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound if you had surgery. These include:
 - The area around your wound is more red or painful.
 - The wound area is very warm to touch.
 - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from your wound area.
 - You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C).
 - You have chills or muscle aches.