

# ABDOMINAL PAIN

**What happens when you have a stomach ache?** — When you have a stomach ache, you have pain or discomfort in the upper portion of 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 as though your belly is filled with air)
- Feeling full too quickly when you start eating

**Should I see a doctor about my stomach ache?** — Most people do not need to see a doctor for a stomach ache. But you should see your doctor 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 stomach aches?** — In some cases, stomach aches are caused by a specific problem, such as a stomach ulcer (a sore on the inside of the stomach) or a condition called “diverticulitis,” in which small pouches in your large intestine get infected.

**What treatments help with stomach symptoms?** — If your symptoms are caused by a specific problem, such as an ulcer, treatments for that problem will likely relieve your symptoms.

**Can I do anything on my own to prevent stomach ache?** — 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 stomach ache:

- Avoid fatty foods, such as red meat, butter, fried foods, and cheese
- Eat a bunch of small meals each day, rather than two or three 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](#)

People — especially kids — sometimes get a stomach ache 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.

If your stomach ache 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 stomach ache the same for children as it is for adults?** — In general, yes. Children get stomach aches for the same reasons that adults do. As with adults, doctors and often do not know what causes stomach pain in children. 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.