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My stomach is hurting so bad

Chronic abdominal pain can be anything from an annoying distraction to a debilitating issue. But putting your finger on why your stomach always hurts can be challenging. The thing that makes diagnosing the cause of abdominal pain so complicated is, well, basic anatomy. Pretty much any and every organ system in the body can play a part in making you feel sick, which means, if it's something that's really bothering you, you should make an appointment with a doctor. But before your appointment, it's a good idea to educate yourself about your symptoms. Think about the diagram of the human body. Your digestive system is squished in your abdomen with your kidneys, liver, gallbladder, spleen, appendix, pancreas, and, if you're a woman, your reproductive organs. And inflammation anywhere can lead to inflammation everywhere. Some abdominal pain is even caused by problems in other parts of the body — like the thyroid or the pituitary gland. You would think that pain after eating would suggest a problem in your digestive system, but even that can't be a smoking gun, diagnostically speaking. Eating can put pressure on organs outside of your digestive system — not to mention that your kidneys and liver both play integral roles in processing the food and beverages that you consume every day. And then there's the all-important role of stress and anxiety. So what are some hints that you can take to the doctor to pinpoint the source of your abdominal pain? Let's check out some of the more common clues. 1. Food allergies and intolerancesIf you find yourself experiencing specifically digestive upset like constipation, diarrhea, or unusual amounts of gas after eating the same kind of food time and time again, you might have an intolerance to the food itself due to the chemistry inside of your gut. People who suffer from Celiac Disease aren't equipped with the enzyme necessary to break down gluten, the protein found in wheat and other grains. People who are lactose intolerant are deficient in the enzyme necessary to break down lactose. If you think you may be suffering from one of these conditions, ask your doctor to confirm whether or not you should cut the offending protein out of your diet. 2. EndometriosisEndometriosis is a condition that, as you might already know, only affects women. The problem arises when the endometrium, which is what you shed each time you menstruate, grows outside of the uterus — usually on the outsides of your ovaries and intestines. The problem is that the endometrium both inside and outside of the uterus behaves as it normally would during your monthly cycle, but only the endometrium inside of the uterus can exit the body. This, as you might imagine, causes extreme lower abdominal pain and can lead to fertility problems and higher rates of ovarian cancer down the line. Your doctor can diagnose endometriosis with a pelvic exam and/or ultrasound, and treatments are available, which vary based on the severity of the case. 3. Irritable Bowel SyndromeIBS is also mostly seen in women. Symptoms include sudden chronic issues with bowel movements, be they too frequent or not frequent enough, mucous in stools, and gas and bloating. Treatment for IBS is mostly dietary, with doctors advising people with this condition to avoid caffeine, alcohol, foods that promote bloating like beans and broccoli, and to increase fiber intake. Exercise is also recommended to alleviate symptoms of IBS. 4. AnxietyStress triggers your body's fight or flight system, which in turn sends adrenaline flooding through your veins. Adrenaline speeds up the old digestive tract in the same way as a cup of coffee would on an empty stomach, which can cause discomfort and even diarrhea. If you're feeling a lot of stress and anxiety, that could certainly be the culprit for your aching stomach. 5. Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)Some people suffer from a condition that causes excess acid in the stomach to work against the flow of gravity and take a U-turn up the esophagus. This can cause inflammation which leads to the kind of pain we associate with heartburn, cough and asthma, and even excess mucous in the sinuses. GERD should be treated by dietary changes — avoiding things like this delicious place of spaghetti marinara — and over-the-counter medicines that limit acid production in the stomach. Ask your doctor what treatments are right for you. 6. Thyroid problemsYour thyroid, which lives all the way up in your neck, regulates body functions in multiple organ systems. It can also cause your digestive system to get all sorts of messed up. An overactive thyroid will cause frequent, loose stools, anxiety, and abnormal weight loss. An under-active thyroid can cause lethargy, constipation, and unexplained weight gain. If your mood, weight, and digestive regularity have all been thrown out of their normal routines, ask your doctor if you could possibly be experiencing a problem with your thyroid. Images: Pexels (5); Pixabay (3) Though commonly eaten as a vegetable, cabbage has many medicinal properties. Here are some of the good and the bad effects of cabbage on your stomach: The Good: Cabbages can be Used to Treat the Lack of Stomach Acid If your body is lacking in stomach acid, it can lead to heartburn, GERD, or acid reflux. Cabbages can help you reduce your discomfort as they strongly stimulate acid production in the stomach. Drinking cabbage juice or fermented cabbage juice from sauerkraut before eating improves your digestion. Cabbage can Help Reduce Stomach Pain and Intestinal Ulcers Cabbage can aid in stomach pain and in the healing of stomach ulcers. According to a report from the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health website, the average healing time for people with stomach ulcers that drank cabbage juice was decreased compared to those that did not drink cabbage juice. The Bad: Cabbages Can Cause Bloating Cabbages are cruciferous vegetables along with broccoli, kale and cauliflower. Cruciferous vegetables contain raffinose which is a sugar that only gets digested in the large intestine where a methane-producing bacteria ferments it. This process produces gas which in turn causes bloating. Then Should You Eat It Or Not? At the beginning, just try moderate amounts and observe how your body would react. If the bloating problem is really serious, you may choose other foods that have the same benefits but not such bad effects. Symptoms of stomach pain after meals Most of the time, the causes of digestive trouble after eating are not too much to worry about. But if the pain is very strong, sudden, or long-lasting, it should be examined by a doctor as soon as possible. Some common warning signs of stomach pain after a meal are: Bloating Just because others can tolerate certain kinds of food well, does not mean you will too. Eating too fast, too much, or foods too high in fat can all trigger gas and bloating issues in the stomach. Try logging the foods you eat and tracking how your body responds to different things. Constipation Stomach pains after eating, coupled with constipation, can spring from various lifestyle and dietary factors. For example, the abdominal muscles and diaphragm are needed to aid digestion, and insufficient fiber in the diet can make it hard for food to pass through your system properly. Heartburn Heartburn often accompanies stomach pain and indigestion. Heartburn is often caused by acid reflux, the reverse flow of stomach acid up into the esophagus, causing burning and discomfort. Too much alcohol and fatty food are often to blame. Nausea Nausea is an important sign to look out for because it has several possible causes, anything from food poisoning to Crohn's disease, a chronic inflammatory disease of the gastrointestinal tract. If you regularly feel nauseous after eating, see a doctor. Other symptoms and warning signs associated with stomach pain after eating are: Jaundice Belching Vomiting Fever A headache is usually just a headache, not an aggressive brain tumor. But persistent or recurring pain could signal a more serious problem lurking within your body. Suspect something ominous? Consult this chart, and then see your doctor. What Hurts?: Your Foot Secondary Symptom: Mild pain in the back of your thigh One Hidden Cause: Herniated lumbar disc Diagnosis: Even if your back feels fine, pain in your foot can mean your sciatic nerve, which snakes from your lower back to your foot, is pinched by a herniated disc. "It can be coupled with feelings of pins and needles in the leg," says Loren Fishman, M.D., an assistant clinical professor at Columbia University. Prevent It: Work your abs. Hunching puts your lower back at risk of wrenching, says Dr. Fishman. Strengthening the abs boosts your ability to maintain good posture. What Hurts?: Your Calf Secondary Symptom: Redness and swelling in the area where you feel the pain One Hidden Cause: Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) Diagnosis: As many as half a million Americans are diagnosed with DVT annually, but thousands of cases go unreported, especially among younger desk jockeys. "Since the pain is similar to a cramp, men write it off," says John Laird, M.D., medical director of the vascular center at the University of California at Davis. Prevent It: Drink water. Keeping hydrated (8 ounces every 2 hours) during long sitting spells ensures healthy bloodflow and prevents clotting, says Dr. Laird. What Hurts?: Your Neck & Shoulders Secondary Symptom: Severe, throbbing headaches One Hidden Cause: Lyme disease Diagnosis: Chances are good you won't know if a pencil-point-size tick latched onto you this summer. That's why many cases of Lyme disease are reported in the fall and winter, when serious symptoms set in. Early indicators of Lyme include neck stiffness and migraines due to the onset of meningitis. Prevent It: Swallow garlic. According to a study, soldiers who took 1,200-milligram capsules daily repelled ticks significantly better than those who didn't. What Hurts?: Your Jaw Secondary Symptom: Audible clicking sound when you open and close your mouth One Hidden Cause: Temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ) Diagnosis: The key symptom of TMJ is acute jaw pain when you open your mouth, says David Hellmann, M.D., chairman of the department of medicine at Johns Hopkins. Prevent It: Put your jaw in neutral. Instead of clenching your teeth when stress strikes, place your tongue behind your upper front teeth, as if you're going to say "N." What Hurts?: Your Mid thigh Secondary Symptom: Leg's skin color lightens when pain strikes One Hidden Cause: Claudication, or acute cramping Diagnosis: "The burning leg pain you feel from DVT occurs during sedentary periods. The pain from claudication is similar but only occurs when you're walking or exercising," says Dr. Laird. The pain is caused by arteries narrowing in your upper legs, cutting the amount of blood and oxygen that reaches your muscles. Prevent It: Pop some pecans. A recent study in Nutrition Research found that eating a handful of vitamin E-packed pecans daily helps prevent arteries from narrowing. What Hurts?: Your Biceps Secondary Symptom: Loss of balance One Hidden Cause: Parkinson's disease Diagnosis: Chances are slim that you'll develop Parkinson's. Fewer than 40,000 Americans are diagnosed each year. But a clear—and confounding—early indicator is long-term pain in both biceps, says Gordon Gilbert, M.D., a professor of physiology and molecular pharmacology at the University of South Florida. Prevent It: Hit the gym. A Harvard study found that men who work out regularly are 40 percent less likely to develop Parkinson's. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. 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