



What is abdominal pain?

Abdominal pain is discomfort anywhere in your belly region — between your ribs and your pelvis. We often think of abdominal pain as “stomach pain” or a “stomachache,” but the pain in your abdomen could be coming from other organs besides your stomach, too.

Your abdomen is home to your:

- **Stomach.**
- **Liver.**
- **Gallbladder.**
- **Pancreas.**
- **Small intestine.**
- **Large intestine.**

These are all organs in your **digestive system**. But pain can also be in your abdominal wall, the skin, and the muscles that make up the outer shell of your abdomen. And sometimes, the pain that you feel in your belly may be coming from somewhere else, like your chest, pelvis, or back.

Abdominal pain can take many forms and can mean many things.

It may feel:

- Mild or severe.
- Dull or sharp.
- Burning or achy.
- Crampy or colicky.
- Constant or intermittent.
- Localized (in one spot) or generalized (all over).

Ultimately, abdominal pain is a subjective symptom that only you can describe. Since your healthcare provider can't measure it, it's what you say it is. Your healthcare provider will always take your abdominal pain seriously.

How common is stomach pain?

Just about everybody will experience abdominal pain at some point. Most of the time, it's not serious and resolves by itself. However, it can be a sign of serious illness or even an emergency. Abdominal pain causes 5% of emergency room visits.

What are the four types of abdominal pain?

Since your abdomen it is home to many organs, your healthcare provider may want to narrow down the kind of pain you're having by narrowing down the region you're feeling it in. Healthcare providers often divide the abdomen into quadrants or four parts. They may ask if your pain is in the:

- The upper part or lower part. **Upper abdominal pain** is above your belly button. **Lower abdominal pain** is below it.
- Right side or left side. The midline of your abdomen runs from your sternum through your belly button.

What does abdominal pain location tell you?

Location is an important clue to your abdominal pain, though it's not the only factor. It may indicate which organs are involved. For example, pain in the upper right quadrant may indicate a problem with your liver or gallbladder.

However, your healthcare provider will also want to know more about what your pain feels like, how often you feel it, and how severe it is. This will give them additional clues about what kind of condition you may have.

Most causes are temporary and not serious. They may have to do with digestion, menstruation, or a passing virus.

For example:

Digestive issues

Abdominal pain after eating may be due to:

- Indigestion.
- Gas and gas pain.
- Constipation.
- Diarrhea.
- Food allergies and intolerances.
- Food poisoning.

Inflammation

Irritation or infection in your organs can cause temporary inflammation, such as:

- Viral gastroenteritis (stomach flu).
- Peptic ulcer disease.
- Chronic acid reflux (GERD).
- Urinary tract infection (UTI).

Female reproductive cycle

If you have a **uterus**, you might experience occasional pain from:

- Menstrual cramps.
- Ovulation pain.



How do you relieve abdominal pain?

Stomach pain has a wide variety of causes and treatments. Some conditions, such as gallstones or appendicitis, may require surgery. Others, such as ulcers or infections, may be eased with medicine. And sometimes you may just have to get through a bout of stomach flu or a kidney stone until it passes.

If you don't know what's causing your abdominal pain, it's important to find out, especially if it doesn't go away on its own. Remember that even mild cases can be serious. However, if you have a pretty good idea that your stomachache is related to digestion, you can begin by treating yourself with:

- Bowel rest. Stop eating, or only eat easy-to-digest foods like crackers or bananas.
- Hydration. Drink plenty of water or a hydration formula.
- Heat therapy. Try a warm water bottle or a soak in the bath.
- Home remedies. Try licorice for gas, ginger for indigestion, or peppermint to help relax your intestinal muscles.

Vocabulary

Abdominal -The area of the body that contains the pancreas, stomach, intestines, liver, gallbladder, and other organs

Digestive system - includes the mouth, pharynx (throat), esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, and anus. It also includes the salivary glands, liver, gallbladder, and pancreas, which make digestive juices and enzymes that help the body digest food and liquids.

Subjective Symptoms - Seen or felt only by the patient

Objective symptoms - Evident to the observer and called physical signs.

Hydration - the replacement of body fluids lost through sweating, exhaling, and eliminating waste. On average, the body loses and needs to replace about 2-3 quarts of water daily. Luckily, many foods we eat are composed mostly of water. Foods with high water content include greens and most fruits and vegetables.

Please click on the words in **purple** for an in-depth explanation.

Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/4167-abdominal-pain>