

Digestive Problems

What are digestive problems?

Digestive problems are related with abdominal cramping with associated diarrhea and constipation. This is sometimes referred to as “spastic colon” and is a common medical problem, which is not completely understood. We do know that the intestines and stomach may have abnormal muscle spasms (intestines squeeze too hard or not hard enough), which causes food to move too quickly or too slowly through the intestines. You may have painful cramping in the abdomen, be constipated, or have gas, indigestion or experience a bloated feeling. Stress and depression may aggravate this condition.

When to seek medical help:

- Blood in your stool or in the toilet after you have a bowel movement.
- A change in the shape of your stool.
- Bowel movements that are gray, white or greasy in appearance.
- Persistent diarrhea mixed with blood or mucus.
- *Sudden onset of abdominal pain associated with a fever and vomiting – see your doctor right away.*

Tips on controlling problems with your digestive system

Simple diet and lifestyle changes may relieve your symptoms:

- Eat a varied diet and avoid foods high in fat, caffeine, spicy foods, concentrated fruit drinks, raw fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Try eating 6 small meals a day. Avoid or eat smaller portions of food that consistently aggravate your symptoms.
- Eat high fiber foods such as whole-grain breads.
- Try using fiber supplements containing psyllium to relieve your constipation or diarrhea. Avoid using laxatives. You may become dependent on them and your intestines may become weakened.
- Learn better ways to deal with your stress. Reduce your stress through exercise sports, or hobbies that help you relax.

