

How to Care for Your Child with abdominal pain

This leaflet will provide you with information about abdominal causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and home care advice.



What is abdominal pain?

Abdominal pain can feel sharp, dull or cramping pain anywhere in the abdomen (tummy, belly or stomach). Children often complain of abdominal pain.

What are the causes of abdominal pain?

Most causes of abdominal pain are not serious, and children often get better by themselves such as:

- Constipation
- Irritable bowel.
- Too much food or food poisoning or
- Food allergies and intolerances.
- Stress or anxiety.
- Gastroenteritis (can cause vomiting and diarrhoea as well)
- Viral infection can cause lymph glands in the abdomen to become swollen, causing pain (called Mesenteric adenitis).
- Monthly period pain can occur before or during a menstrual period.

Things to avoid:

- Avoid foods and drinks that may bother the stomach like soda, caffeine, orange juice, milk, cheese, fried or greasy food, high-fat foods, and tomatoes.
- Avoid foods and drinks that cause gas, like beans, broccoli, hard candy.

If your doctor advises giving medicine for pain, you can give:

- Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (any brand).
- Follow the instruction on the medicine package for the correct dose for your child.
- Do not give your child Aspirin as this can cause serious complications.

When should I seek medical advice?

Seek medical advice if:

- Your child Has abdominal pain for more than 24 hrs that getting worse or moved to a different area in the abdomen.
- The pain returns frequently and more intense.
- Your child is unable to poop.
- Your child has a fever.
- Your child has pain when peeing.

Go to the Emergency Department if your child:

- Has a fever (temperature over 38 degrees).
- Is pale, sweaty, less active and unwell.
- Refusing to drink fluids.
- Vomiting for more than 24 hours and unable to keep fluids down, or their vomit is green in colour.
- Has blood in their vomit or stool (poo).
- Has difficulties passing urine (doing a wee).
- Is a baby and has less than four wet nappies a day.
- Has pain or lumps in their groin.
- Has a skin rash.
- Has had a recent injury (like falling onto bike handlebars).

Some of the urgent causes that require immediate attention are:

- Urine infections.
- Appendicitis.
- Bowel obstruction.
- Bacterial bowel infection.
- Gallstones – these are small stones that form inside the gallbladder.
- Ingestion of Foreign body.
- Injury to the abdomen.
- Ruptured ovarian cyst.

Sometimes there is no cause found for the abdominal pain; sometimes can become more evident with time.

however, a detailed medical assessment will ensure that your child does not have any of the serious causes.

How is the cause of abdominal pain diagnosed?

The doctor will ask a few detailed questions about your child's health and examine your child. Your doctor will decide if further investigation or blood tests are required. Once the doctor confirms that there is no serious cause of your child's pain, then you will be advised on what you can do at home to help your child feel better.

Home care advice

We advise you to try the following, one at a time, to see if they help your child's pain. Encourage your child to:

- Take rest and lie down quietly.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Try to poop regularly to prevent constipation.
- Avoid solid foods for a few hours. During this time, only give clear liquids like (watered-down fruit juice or water) until your child feels better, then try small amounts of soft semisolid foods like rice, applesauce, and crackers.
- Take 4 or 5 small meals a day (instead of 3 large meals a day).