

3.13 Digestive health - Gallstones

Linda, 42 has been getting severe pain in her right upper tummy about an hour after eating.

Linda: This is really horrible doctor, do you think I might have cancer?

Provide: It's unlikely to be anything that nasty Linda. You don't have anything pointing in that direction such as persistent pain, weight loss or yellow jaundice. I think you might have gallstones.

Elicit: Does that surprise you?

Linda: A little. Can that be nasty?

Provide: Gallstones can occasionally do a couple of things. If they move about in the tubes connecting the gallbladder to the liver and the bowel where they cause severe pain. This happens more if you eat fatty food. Gallstones can also cause infection in and around the gallbladder.

I'd like to arrange an ultrasound scan of your tummy to confirm that you have gallstones and a blood test will help us too.

Elicit: How does that sound?

Linda: Fine doctor. But I really need something to deal with this pain.

Provide: I'll give you some pain killers to take to relax the bile tubes. Take them when the pain comes on. If you feel unwell, shivery, feverish, or turn yellow, you need to see someone urgently. I'll see you shortly after the scan to talk about what we do next.

Elicit: Would you be happy to read about gallstones online?

Linda: Sure.

Provide: Take a look at [patient.info](#) for reliable information.