

Discharge instructions for gallstones



Gallstones are loose lumps of hard material like stone that form in the gallbladder. This is a small organ that stores and concentrates bile. Bile is a liquid formed by the liver. It helps you digest fats. Gallstones can form when bile hardens. The stones may not cause symptoms. Or they can cause pain or infection. Gallstones may be as tiny as grains of sand or as big as a golf ball. You may develop one or many gallstones in your gallbladder. Talk with your healthcare provider about the best treatment for your stones.

Home care

To help prevent symptoms:

- Eat a low-fat diet. Fatty foods cause the gallbladder to release bile to help digest the fats. This can cause pain when you have gallstones.
- Limit fatty dairy foods, animal fats, and vegetable oils.
- Read food labels. Make sure the foods you are choosing are low in fat.
- Maintain a healthy weight. But don't aim for rapid weight loss.
- Don't skip meals. It may raise your risk for gallstones.

Keep all appointments with your healthcare provider. They need to track your condition. Talk about treatment choices with your provider. They may include:

- **Surgery.** This treatment removes the gallbladder and gallstones.
- **Medicine.** Certain medicines can be used to dissolve the stones. This option is for people who can't have surgery. Take your medicines exactly as directed. Don't skip doses. It takes time for the medicine to work. When you stop the medicine, the gallstones will likely come back. The medicine doesn't work for all types of gallstones.
- **Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP).** This procedure is done with a thin tube that has a video camera. X-rays are used to find the stones. They are then removed from the common bile duct.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment as advised.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Severe pain in the upper belly, shoulder, or back
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Nausea or vomiting
- Yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice)

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