

Indigestion

Most people have indigestion at some point. Usually, it is not a sign of anything more serious and you can treat it yourself.

Symptoms of indigestion (dyspepsia)

Symptoms of indigestion after eating or drinking include:

- heartburn – a painful burning feeling in the chest, often after eating
- feeling full and bloated
- feeling sick
- belching and farting
- bringing up food or bitter-tasting fluids into your mouth

When it is not indigestion

Stomach ache or back pain are usually not symptoms of indigestion.

Indigestion, heartburn and acid reflux

Heartburn and acid reflux are the same thing – when acid from your stomach comes up your throat. You'll have a burning feeling when this happens. This can be a symptom of indigestion.

Treating indigestion yourself

There's usually no need to see a GP about indigestion. There are some things you can do at home.

Do

- ✓ cut down on tea, coffee, cola or alcohol
- ✓ prop your head and shoulders up in bed – this can stop stomach acid coming up while you sleep

- ✓ lose weight if you're overweight

Don't

- ✗ do not eat 3 to 4 hours before going to bed
- ✗ do not have rich, spicy or fatty foods
- ✗ do not take ibuprofen or aspirin – this can make indigestion worse
- ✗ do not smoke

Causes of indigestion

The acid in your stomach can irritate the stomach lining or your throat. This causes indigestion and gives you a burning feeling and pain.

Other things that can cause indigestion include:

- medicines
- smoking
- alcohol
- a type of bacterial infection called helicobacter pylori

Stress can make indigestion worse.

Illnesses that can cause indigestion:

- hiatus hernia
- stomach ulcer
- stomach cancer
- helicobacter pylori infections
- gastro-oesophageal disease (GORD)

A pharmacist can help with indigestion

A pharmacist can recommend medicines to ease the burning feeling or pain that can come with indigestion.

Medicines that help reduce acid in your stomach include:

- antacids
- proton pump inhibitors

Some indigestion medicines are best to take after eating as their effects last longer. Check the information leaflet that comes with the medicines for more information.

Pregnant women and treating indigestion

Pregnant women often get indigestion. It's very common from 27 weeks onwards.

It can be caused by hormonal changes and the growing baby pressing against the stomach.

A pharmacist can help with uncomfortable feelings or pain. They can recommend the best medicines to use when you're pregnant.

Contact your GP if you:

- keep getting indigestion
- are in severe pain
- are 55 or older
- have lost a lot of weight without meaning to
- have difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- keep being sick
- have [iron deficiency anaemia](#)
- feel like you have a lump in your stomach
- have bloody vomit or poo

These symptoms can be a sign of something more serious.

Related topic

Read more about [heartburn and indigestion in pregnancy](#)

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