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Malabsorption Syndromes

Your small intestine does most of the digesting of the foods you eat. If you have a malabsorption syndrome, your small intestine cannot absorb nutrients from foods.

Causes of malabsorption syndromes include:

- Celiac disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/celiacdisease.html>]
- Lactose intolerance [<https://medlineplus.gov/lactoseintolerance.html>]
- Short bowel syndrome. This happens after surgery to remove half or more of the small intestine. You might need the surgery if you have a problem with the small intestine from a disease, injury, or birth defect.
- Whipple disease, a rare bacterial infection
- Genetic diseases
- Certain medicines

Symptoms of different malabsorption syndromes can vary. They often include chronic diarrhea, abnormal stools, weight loss, and gas. Your doctor may use lab, imaging, or other tests to make a diagnosis.

Treatment of malabsorption syndromes depends on the cause.

Start Here

- Malabsorption [<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/pages/malabsorption.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Overview of Malabsorption [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/digestive-disorders/malabsorption/overview-of-malabsorption>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/trastornos-gastrointestinales/malabsorc%C3%B3n/introducci%C3%B3n-a-la-malabsorc%C3%B3n>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Lower GI Series (Barium Enema) [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/lower-gi-series>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/transito-gastrointestinal-inferior>]
- Stool Elastase [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/stool-elastase/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/elastasa-fecal/>]
- Stool Tests (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/labtest8.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/labtest8.html>]
- Xylose Testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/xylose-testing/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-xilosa/>]

Related Issues

- Alagille Syndrome [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/liver-disease/alagille-syndrome>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Specifics

- Bassen-Kornzweig syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001666.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001666.htm>]
- Intestinal Lymphangiectasia [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/digestive-disorders/malabsorption/intestinal-lymphangiectasia>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/trastornos-gastrointestinales/malabsorción/intangiectasia-intestinal>]
- Short Bowel Syndrome [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/short-bowel-syndrome>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
- Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO) [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/small-intestinal-bacterial-overgrowth/symptoms-causes/syc-20370168?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/small-intestinal-bacterial-overgrowth/symptoms-causes/syc-20370168?p=1>]
- Tropical sprue [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000275.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000275.htm>]
- Whipple Disease [<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/7889/whipple-disease>]  (Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center)

Genetics

- Abetalipoproteinemia: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/abetalipoproteinemia>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Congenital sucrase-isomaltase deficiency: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/congenital-sucrase-isomaltase-deficiency>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Glucose-galactose malabsorption: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/glucose-galactose-malabsorption>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Hereditary folate malabsorption: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/hereditary-folate-malabsorption>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Lactose intolerance: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/lactose-intolerance>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Malabsorption Syndromes [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Malabsorption+Syndromes%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Real-world experience with the diagnosis of bile acid malabsorption (BAM) using... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40383704>]
- Article: Use of Oligomeric Formulas in Malabsorption: A Delphi Study and Consensus. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40362734>]
- Article: Hypoabsorption in Bariatric Surgery: Is the Benefit Worth the Risk? [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40142209>]
- Malabsorption Syndromes -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Malabsorption+Syndromes%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+>]

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Find an Expert

- American College of Gastroenterology [<https://gi.org>]
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

Children

- Collecting a Stool Sample for Testing (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stool-tests-done.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/stool-tests-done.html>]
- Failure to Thrive (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/failure-thrive.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/failure-thrive.html>]
- Short Bowel Syndrome (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/short-bowel-syndrome.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/short-bowel-syndrome.html>]
- Short Bowel Syndrome and Intestinal Failure [<https://gikids.org/digestive-topics/short-bowel-syndrome/>] (North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition)
Also in Spanish [<https://gikids.org/short-bowel-syndrome/?lang=es>]

Patient Handouts

- D-xylose absorption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003606.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003606.htm>]
- Fecal fat [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003588.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003588.htm>]
- Malabsorption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000299.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000299.htm>]
- Short bowel syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000237.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000237.htm>]
- Small bowel bacterial overgrowth [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000222.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000222.htm>]
- Stools - floating [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003128.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003128.htm>]
- Whipple disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000209.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000209.htm>]



Bassen-Kornzweig syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001666.htm>]

D-xylose absorption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003606.htm>]

Failure to thrive [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000991.htm>]

Fecal fat [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003588.htm>]

Malabsorption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000299.htm>]

Short bowel syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000237.htm>]

Small bowel bacterial overgrowth [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000222.htm>]

Stools - floating [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003128.htm>]

Tropical sprue [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000275.htm>]

Whipple disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000209.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Celiac Disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/celiacdisease.html>]

Lactose Intolerance [<https://medlineplus.gov/lactoseintolerance.html>]

Small Intestine Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/smallintestinedisorders.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Malabsorption Syndromes* is the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>]

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