



Information for Patients & Caregivers

What you need to know about Dyspepsia
(Indigestion)?

Valid From: 28 July 2020
Date of Next Revision: 28 July 2022

+ HOW DIGESTION OCCURS?

The gastrointestinal tract (gut) refers to the entire tube that runs from the mouth to the anus. When we eat, food passes down our throat in a long tube known as the oesophagus (gullet) into the stomach.

Our stomach produces acid and enzymes which helps to digest food. Food then passes gradually from the stomach into another tube (duodenum) which makes up the first part of the small intestine.

Further digestion of food occurs in the duodenum, and the digested food is then absorbed into the body from the other part of the small intestine.

+ WHAT IS DYSPEPSIA?

Dyspepsia (Indigestion) is the term used to describe a group of symptoms including pain or discomfort that arise from problem in the upper gut after eating, although it can also occur with an empty stomach.

The main symptoms of dyspepsia are:

- Pain or burning discomfort in the upper tummy.
- Worrisome or quick feeling of fullness after eating.

Other symptoms that may develop include:

- Bloating or belching.
- Heartburn.
- Nausea and or vomiting.

These symptoms occur on and off, rather than being present all the time. They may be relieved or worsened with eating or vomiting and often improve with antacids.

The frequency of these bouts varies from one affected person to another. Some people have occasional bouts of dyspepsia, which resolves quickly and is of little concern. Others may have more frequent bouts of dyspepsia, which affects their quality of life.

+ WHAT CAUSES DYSPEPSIA?

The common causes of dyspepsia include:

- **Duodenal and stomach (gastric) ulcers.**
- **Gastritis and duodenitis** inflammation of the stomach and/or duodenum.
- **Oesophagitis and Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)** occurs when acids from the stomach flow back up into the oesophagus.
- **Hiatus hernia** occurs when part of the stomach pushes up into the chest cavity through a defect in the diaphragm.
- **Helicobacter pylori** (*H. pylori*) an infection that causes stomach or duodenal ulcer and gastritis.
- **Cancer affecting the oesophagus or stomach.**
- **Positive family history.**
- **Lifestyle factors**, such as:
 - Diet (Spicy or fatty food).
 - Some herbal supplements.
 - Smoking.
 - Alcohol.
 - Obesity or overweight.
 - Stressful lifestyle.
- **Certain medications** such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and steroids.

+ WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

It is important that you see your doctor immediately if:

- Your symptoms become severe or fail to resolve despite taking antacids.
- *H. pylori* has been treated but symptoms persist.
- You develop additional symptoms which suggest that your dyspepsia may be caused by a serious underlying condition such as stomach cancer, or a complication from an ulcer such as:
 - Passing blood streaked or dark coloured stools.
 - Bloody vomitus.
 - Persistent vomiting.
 - Unintentional weight.
 - Anaemia.
- You are age 55 or older and develop unexplained dyspepsia.

+ WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO

Your doctor will ask you questions about your lifestyle and discuss the above causes and symptoms of dyspepsia. Your doctor will examine your tummy and other parts of your body.

A diagnosis of dyspepsia will be made, if one or more of the main symptoms that have been present for at least 3 months and within 6 months of the first onset of symptom.

Your doctor may order some tests depending on your symptoms and signs such as:

- ***H. pylori* test** to check for infection.
- **Blood test** to check for anaemia
- **Endoscopy test** to check inside your oesophagus, stomach and duodenum.

Treatment options will depend on the test results. Your doctor will discuss the treatment options with you including general advice on lifestyle choice. In some cases, you may be referred to a specialist for further treatment.



+ TREATMENTS

Treatment options for dyspepsia include:

- **Lifestyle Advice** where required, such as
 - Weight loss.
 - Stop smoking.
 - Regular physical exercise.
 - Eating healthy diets.
 - Reducing salt and caffeine intake.
 - Reducing alcohol intake.
- **Antacids** are alkali liquid or tablets that neutralise stomach acid and are prescribed for symptom relief.
- ***H. Pylori* eradication therapy** used to treat dyspepsia if *H. pylori* infection causes dyspepsia.

+ MEDICATIONS FOR H. PYLORI TREATMENT

The following classes of medicines are used to treat *Helicobacter pylori* infection.

- **Proton pump inhibitors.**
- **Antibiotics.**
- **Bismuth-based suspension**

Your doctor will advise on which of the above classes of medications is best for you.

Your treatment may last for about 6 -8 weeks depending on the cause of the dyspepsia, it is important you to follow your doctor's instructions and advice to achieve the best treatment outcome.

- Avoid foods known to cause indigestion problems such as spicy and fatty foods.
- Eat smaller but more frequent meals.
- Avoid wearing tight belts.
- Do not bend over or lie down after a meal to prevent your stomach contents from being pushed upwards thereby precipitating heartburn.
- if you have heartburn problems especially at night, try and sleep with your upper body in a more propped-up position and avoid eating within two hours of bedtime.

OTHER TREATMENTS:

Barrier treatment (sodium alginate) may help with heartburn but it is not suitable for people with heart or kidney conditions, and patients with these conditions should inform their doctor or the pharmacist.

Medications for treatment of *H. pylori* may interact with some medicines. Talk to your doctor before taking other medicines.

Also talk to your doctor if you experience any side effects.

+ FOLLOW-UP

It is important that you have regular checks and follow-up appointments to ensure that your medications are at an optimal dose for you.

Ensure you take your medicine at the same time each day and for the length of time prescribed by the doctor.

Ask your doctor about the side effects of the medicines prescribed to you and whether there are any activities you need to avoid.

CHANGES IN YOUR ROUTINE MEDICATIONS:

If a medicine that you are taking is suspected to cause or worsen your symptoms, your doctor may change this medication.

+ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on diagnosis and management of Dyspepsia can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) Qatar.

The Guideline is available for public on MOPH website: www.moph.gov.qa.

