

# Stomach Cramps and Diarrhea

**A**lthough stomach cramps may last for a few minutes, they can be quite hurting. Stomach cramps give an unpleasant feeling due to involuntarily contraction of the stomach muscles. When these irregular contraction are followed by increased frequency in defecation (diarrhea), one can not take it lightly as these are the symptoms of an underlying digestive disorder.

Some cases, the cramping is confined to a specific part of the stomach, indicating that an organ within the stomach is not working properly. This could be your gallbladder, pancreas or the intestines. Nevertheless, if the cramp like pain affects a major part of your stomach, it is often due to overeating and inactive lifestyle that leads to gas, indigestion and bloating.



## Causes

Many individuals experience stomach cramps and *diarrhea* in the early morning. This is often the result of poor eating habits, too much alcohol or coffee consumption. Gastrointestinal disorders that cause these health problems are provided below:

**Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS):** Abdominal cramping accompanied by loose movements is an indication of irritable bowel syndrome. **IBS** is an intestinal problem that can cause moderate to severe stomach pain. Diagnosed in 20% of the world's population, this digestive disorder specifically targets the colon (the large intestine), that leads to food digestion problems. Overeating and excess alcohol consumption are the main contributing factors to IBS.

**Pancreatitis:** Pancreatitis, the inflammation of the pancreas can also trigger abdominal cramps and bowel dysfunction that manifests in the form of watery bowel movement. As we all know, pancreas is a tongue shaped, glandular organ, around 15 cm long and depends on the abdominal region at the rear of the stomach. The pancreas is generally associated with producing enzymes and digestive juice that allow the body to take in and digest ingested food. It is observed that pancreatitis is often diagnosed in alcoholics and people affected with autoimmune disorders. No matter what the cause is, pancreatitis signs that happen are bad digestion, gas, **nausea** and loose stools.

**Cholecystitis:** In cholecystitis, the gallbladder, a muscular organ located below the liver, appears inflamed. The main task of the gallbladder is to collect bile (digestive juice) from the liver and pass it on to the stomach to promote digestion. Formation of gallstones in the gallbladder is the most common cause of cholecystitis. Cholecystitis patients typically complain about cramping pain in the right side abdominal region and suffer from unwanted changes in healthy bowel function such as diarrhea. As the condition progresses, it might affect the liver and trigger jaundice.

**Diverticulitis:** Studies show that people who have crossed 60 years of age, have the tendency to deal with diverticulosis, a condition in which sac like structures (pouches, also referred to as diverticula) kind on the the inner wall of the large intestine (colon). In most cases, these multiple pouches occur in the lower left region of the colon. These pouches are safe and normally do not interfere with regular bowel function. Hence, many don't even realize that they are having diverticula. However, when these pouches get swollen due to an infection, the condition is referred to as diverticulitis. This condition is characterized by cramps that usually happen in the left side abdominal region. Apart from cramping, diverticulitis also disturbs typical bowel habits, which might lead to bloody and watery stools.

- **Appendicitis:** Appendicitis triggers inflammation of the appendix, a small 4-inch tubular structure at the start of the large intestine.
- Cramps that cause sharp pain in the right side abdominal region is the most common symptom of appendicitis.
- Besides causing severe stubborn belly pain and fever, patients may also experience diarrhea or irregularity.
- **Stomach Infections:** Infections that target the digestive tract can also trigger health problems such as stomach ulcers and gastroenteritis.
- Abdominal cramps together with diarrhea and vomiting are the common symptoms of a variety of stomach ailments.
- People with stomach problems, often lose the desire to have food.
- Abdominal discomfort is often regarded as a precursor to stomach ulcers.



## DiarrheaIbsIrritable Bowel SyndromeNauseaConstipation

- **Colon Cancer:** Persistent diarrhea followed by stomach cramps can also indicate colon cancer.
- Formation of cancerous growth in the colon often activates chronic diarrhea and abdominal pain.
- Till the cancerous tumor ends up being quite large, symptoms usually are mild, hence, go unnoticed.
- However, once the cancer spreads significantly rectal bleeding that may manifest in the form of bloody diarrhea, is often observed.

**Crohn's Disease:** When the digestive tract gets inflamed, the condition is referred to as Crohn's disease. The repercussions of Crohn's disease include loose stools and stomach pain. Sometimes, inflammation is detected in a specific portion of the digestive tract that leads to moderate abdominal pain and diarrhea. Crohn's disease sometimes triggers formation of little sores (open injuries) on the outside wall of the intestine. If the condition is left without treatment, the sores might spread to inner intestinal wall, which may reduce appetite, eventually causing significant weight reduction. Inflammation of the tissue in the digestive system is a cause for concern as consumption of foods, especially difficult foods such as toasts can hurt the tissue and cause extreme bleeding. As an outcome, blood in stools might be detected during bowel evacuation.

- **Medications:** Intake of certain medicines such as dexedrine, may also bring health problems such as watery stools and abdominal cramps.
- These side effects are typically observed when drugs such as dexedrine are mistreated.
- Overuse of prescription medications is one of the most common causes of abdominal cramps and frequent defecation.

*Gastrointestinal disorder: Eating contaminated food items often cause food poisoning, which many times is not serious but can cause diarrhea and is accompanied by stomach cramps.*

“ Maintaining good food hygiene, avoiding milk products and following food safety practices such as cooking it properly is the mainstay of the treatment for stomach cramps and diarrhea. Keep in mind, that a visit with the doctor is essential when these health issues do not go away or keep repeating at short intervals. Even an intestinal obstruction can cause stomach upset and discomfort. Therefore, diagnosing the cause and treating it at the earliest will work in favor of the client and prevent further complications.

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