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## **ABDOMINAL PAIN**

Abdominal pain is pain or cramping anywhere in the abdomen. Children often complain of abdominal pain. It is one of the most common reasons children see a doctor. Most cases of abdominal pain are not serious and children get better by themselves.

Abdominal pain can happen suddenly or develop slowly. Children often have other symptoms that are associated with the cause of the abdominal pain, such as vomiting, diarrhea and/or fever. **Causes of Abdominal pain**

- Constipation
- Infections – gastroenteritis, urine infection
- Food related – too much food, food poisoning or food allergies and intolerances
- Surgical problems – such as appendicitis or a bowel obstruction (uncommon)
- Period pain – some girls can also have monthly pain before or during their period
- Some children get abdominal pain as a result of stress
- Worms in the stomach

The causes of abdominal pain can be hard to diagnose. Often the cause is not apparent and the symptoms may take some time to become obvious.

### **At home care**

Here are some general ways to ease your child's pain:

- Help your child drink a normal amount of fluids. Getting your child to drink is important as it prevents dehydration (loss of water).
- If your child is hungry, let them eat what they want or offer bland foods such as rice, bananas or toast. Do not force your child to eat if they feel unwell. They will start eating again when they feel better.
- Encourage sitting on the toilet. Sometimes passage of stool helps to ease the pain.
- Rubbing a child's tummy or having a distraction, such as reading a book, can sometimes ease the pain.
- Give Cyclopam if your child is in pain or is miserable. Carefully check the label for the correct dose. Only give as directed.

### **Treatment**

Treatment may be as simple as going home to rest, drink fluids and eat a bland diet. At other times, your child may be admitted to hospital or may need an operation (surgery).

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Sometimes tests are needed. They may include:

- blood tests
- a urine test
- a stool sample
- X-rays of the abdomen
- ultrasound

### **What should I expect?**

Many children with abdominal pain get better quickly, without any treatment and often no cause can be found. Sometimes the cause becomes more obvious with time and treatment can be started. This is why it is important to see your doctor for follow up.

### **Repeated attacks of abdominal pain**

Some children get repeated attacks of abdominal pain, which can be very worrying for parents. Often no health problem can be found. Children may have abdominal pain when they are worried about themselves or people around them.

Think about whether there is anything that is upsetting your child at home, at school, kindergarten or with friends. See your doctor for advice. A referral may be needed to a paediatrician (a doctor who specialises in children) or gastroenterologist (a doctor who specialises in tummy problems)

### **Follow-up**

If pain or problems persist for more than 24 hours, take your child to your local doctor. See your local doctor or hospital as soon as possible if your child:

- has severe pain (despite pain medication) or the pain has moved
- has pain that returns frequently and regularly
- does not want to move
- has a fever (temperature over 38.5° degrees)
- is pale, sweaty, lethargic (hard to wake) and unwell
- is refusing to drink fluids
- is vomiting for more than 24 hours and not keeping fluids down, or their vomit is green in colour
- has blood in their vomit or faeces (poo)
- has problems passing urine or hasn't done a wee (less than four wet nappies a day)
- has pain or lumps in their groin
- has a skin rash which is sore or painful
- has had a recent injury (for example, falling onto bike handlebars)

Or if you are concerned for any other reason.

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**Key points to remember**

- Many children get abdominal pain and most get better by themselves.
- Often no cause can be found, and other times a cause becomes more obvious with time.
- If your child has abdominal pain and looks unwell, take your child to your doctor or local hospital.

**Adapted from: [https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Abdominal\\_pain](https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Abdominal_pain)**