

Stomach aches (Abdominal Pain)

What is a stomach ache?

Any pain in the stomach (abdominal area) is a stomach ache. Most children will have a stomach ache at some time.

What causes a stomach ache?

It is often hard to find out exactly why a child has a stomach ache. Knowing where the pain is and how much pain your child has is helpful. Very young children may not be able to tell you where or how bad it hurts. Common causes of stomach ache in children are:

- Hunger.
- Stomach flu (gastroenteritis).
- Constipation (can't poop).
- Drinking cow's milk if your child is lactose intolerant.
- Stress.
- Pain with the menstrual cycle or period (dysmenorrhea).
- Pain in the muscles or bones.
- Coughing a lot.

How is it treated?

Treatment is based on the cause of the stomach ache. Common treatments include:

- Rest and relaxation.
- Eating at scheduled times.
- Bland diet. This means no spicy or greasy foods.
- Lots of fluids. Drinking enough water is very important.
- Medicines like pain relievers or antacids. Ask your child's health care provider first.
- Your child's health care provider may recommend laxatives if constipation is a problem.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Wakes up at night in pain.
- Has pain in one specific area (localized).
- Loses weight or stops growing.
- Vomits blood or has blood in their stools.
- Has a family history of bowel problems.
- Has other symptoms like fever, rash, joint pains or is peeing very often.
- Shows any signs of dehydration: dry mouth, fewer tears when crying or no urine for 8 to 12 hours.
- Is having a hard time breathing or is breathing very fast.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.