

Acute Abdominal Pain

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What is acute abdominal pain?

- Acute abdominal pain is a sharp pain in the stomach.
- It is usually around the bellybutton.
- Acute pain happens all of a sudden.
- The pain can last several minutes or hours.
- It happens within minutes or over a few days.

Who can get it?

- Stomach pain is very common in children.

What causes the pain?

- The stomach pain may or may not be caused by illness.
- The following symptoms could be due to an urgent condition. Call your doctor if your child has:
 - Stomach pain for more than 1 hour.
 - Very sharp stomach pain.
 - Diarrhea, bloating, or gas.
 - Vomiting, especially if vomit is dark green or yellow.
 - Few bowel movements.
 - Sour taste in the mouth.
 - Chest pain.
 - Bulging in the groin or scrotum.
 - Fever, chills.
 - Pain with urination, very little urine, strange colored urine.
 - Blood in the stool or black stools
 - Burning pain that gets better after eating
 - Pain that starts after eating certain kinds of food.
 - Feeling tired.
 - Jaundice (yellow color to skin).
 - Weight loss or poor weight gain.
 - Child cannot stand tall. Pain makes him bend at waist.
 - Pain in testicle or scrotum.
 - Difficulty breathing.
- If your child does not have these symptoms, follow the instructions in the "What should I do?" section below.

What should I do?

- Keep watching your child. Call your doctor if he has stomach pain for more than 1 hour or very sharp stomach pain.
- Take his temperature.
- Do not force your child to eat. Have him drink plenty of clear fluids if he will take them.
- Understand that even if you can't find a reason for it, your child's pain is real.
- Do not treat your child as if he is "faking it." Do not punish him for complaining of pain.
- Have him lie down until he feels better.
- A heating pad or hot water bottle might help him feel better.

How can the pain be treated?

- The doctor will examine your child to see what is causing the pain.

- If needed, blood, urine, or x-rays may be ordered.
- Your child's treatment will depend on the cause of the pain.
- The doctor may tell you to keep watching your child for signs of illness. Treatment may include medicine or even surgery.

When should I call the doctor?

- See "What symptoms should I look for?" above.
- Call your doctor if your child has stomach pain for more than 1 hour or very sharp stomach pain.
- Call the doctor if pain gets worse.
- Call the doctor if you suspect your child has symptoms of another condition.
- Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns.

Quick Answers

- Acute abdominal pain is a sharp pain in the stomach.
- Stomach pain is very common in children.
- The stomach pain may or may not be caused by illness. Watch your child's symptoms in case he may be ill.
- If your child has other symptoms with the pain, such as diarrhea, fever, or vomiting, call the doctor.
- Do not force your child to eat. Have him drink plenty of clear fluids if he will take them.
- The doctor may want to test your child to see what is causing the pain.
- Call your doctor if your child has stomach pain for more than 1 hour or very sharp stomach pain.

References

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