



INTERLACHEN PEDIATRICS

Abdominal Pain

Description

- Your child complains that his abdomen (stomach) hurts.

Similar Condition

For babies less than 3 months old with fussy crying, see Colic.

Cause

The causes are numerous. Usually acute abdominal pains are caused by something simple like overeating, gas pains from drinking too much soda pop, or other types of indigestion. Sometimes a stomachache signals the onset of viral gastroenteritis (stomach flu), and vomiting or diarrhea soon follow.

The most common causes of recurrent abdominal pain are stress and worries. Over 10% of children have recurrent stomachaches from stress. The pain occurs in the pit of the stomach or near the belly button. The pain is low grade but real. Recurrent stomachaches can have numerous causes and deserve medical attention.

Expected Course

With harmless causes, the pain is usually better or gone in 2 hours. With gastroenteritis, the cramps may precede each bout of vomiting or diarrhea. With serious causes, the pain worsens or becomes constant.

Home Care

1. Rest

Your child should lie down and rest until he feels better. A warm washcloth or heating pad on the abdomen for 20 minutes may speed recovery.

2. Diet

Avoid giving your child solid foods; permit only sips of clear fluids. Keep a vomiting pan handy. Younger children are especially

likely to refer to nausea as "a stomachache."

3. Sitting on the toilet

Encourage sitting on the toilet and trying to pass a BM. This may relieve pain if it is due to constipation or impending diarrhea.

4. Common mistakes in treating abdominal pain

Do not give any medications for stomach cramps unless you have talked with your physician. Especially avoid laxatives, enemas, and painkillers.

5. The worried stomach

If your child has been evaluated by a physician and has stomachaches from worries, these suggestions might ease the pains:

- Help your child worry less. Children with recurrent stomachaches tend to be sensitive, serious, conscientious, even model children. This can make them more vulnerable to the normal stresses of life, such as changing schools or moving. Help your youngster talk about events that trigger his pains and how he's going to cope with them.
- Make sure that your youngster doesn't miss any school because of stomachaches. These children have a tendency to want to stay home when the going gets rough.
- Teach your child to use relaxation exercises for mild pains. Have him lie down in a quiet place; take deep, slow breaths; and think about something pleasant. Listening to audiotapes that teach relaxation might help.
- Caution: Your child should have a complete medical checkup before you conclude that recurrent stomachaches are due to worrying too much.

Call Your Physician Immediately If:

- The pain is severe AND lasts more than 1 hour.
- The pain is constant AND has lasted more than 2 hours.
- The pain comes and goes (cramps) AND lasts more than 24 hours.
- The pain is in the scrotum or testicle.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

Call Your Physician During Office Hours If:

- This is a recurrent problem for your child.
- You have other questions or concerns.

Related Topics

Constipation

Diarrhea

Menstrual Cramps

Pain with Urination

Vomiting

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