

Gastroparesis

Gastroparesis is a disorder in which the stomach takes too long to empty its contents. It happens when nerves to the stomach are damaged or stop working. The nerves that control the movement of food through the digestive tract can be damaged when exposed to high blood glucose levels over a long time.

Gastroparesis tends to be a chronic condition. It affects people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

Symptoms

Symptoms may be mild or severe and include:

- burps that smell bad
- heartburn
- nausea and vomiting
- early feeling of fullness
- weight loss
- not feeling hungry
- bloating
- unstable blood glucose levels
- gastroesophageal reflux

Diagnosis

The diagnosis is based on the symptoms. Your doctor may order other tests to make sure that the gastroparesis is not being caused by other medical conditions.

Treatment

- Eat 6 small meals per day or several liquid meals.
- Eat a low fibre diet.
- Avoid foods high in fat and do not use any added fat.
- Chew food well before swallowing.
- Take fluids throughout the meal.
- Sit upright or walk for 30 minutes or more after eating

Avoid medications that delay the emptying of the stomach. Examples include:

- antacids that contain aluminum (example: Amphojel[®])
- narcotic pain medications (examples: Percocet[®], Tylenol[®] # 3, codeine, and morphine)
- medicines with an anticholinergic effect (examples: Benadryl[®], Gravol[®], and Elavil[®])
- bulk-forming agents (example: Metamucil[®])

There are medications that can help the stomach to empty more quickly (examples: metoclopramide, and domperidone (Motilium[®])). Ask your doctor if these medications are suitable for you.

The most important treatment for gastroparesis is to manage your blood glucose levels as well as possible. If you have type 1 diabetes, you may want to:

- take your insulin more often
- take your insulin after you eat instead of before
- switch to a fast-acting insulin like NovoRapid[®] or Humalog[®]
- check your blood glucose levels often after you eat and give insulin as needed

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