

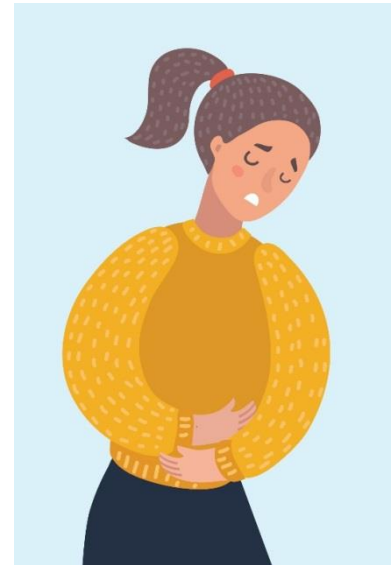
Indigestion

Indigestion refers to the feeling of discomfort or pain in the upper part of the abdomen. You may feel full, bloated or nauseated when you experience indigestion. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with “*heartburn*”, which refers to a burning sensation at the lower chest region, caused when stomach acid back flows into the oesophagus (a long, hollow tube connecting your throat to your stomach) and irritates its lining.

Causes of Indigestion

Indigestion usually occurs after eating, and is caused by irritation of the stomach lining by stomach acid. Factors that can trigger indigestion may or may not be related to cancer and its treatment. These include:

- Stress
- Smoking
- Certain foods / beverages (see “***What you can do***” below)
- Certain medications (e.g. steroids, anti-inflammatory painkillers)
- Chemotherapy drugs
- Cancer affecting the upper digestive tract
- Poor oral or fluid intake
- Inactivity
- Constipation



How it can be treated

Your doctor or nurse may ask you more questions to determine the possible cause of your indigestion. You may be advised on lifestyle changes to reduce the occurrence of indigestion (see section below on “***What you can do***”). Your doctor may also prescribe some medications to relieve the discomfort:

- Medications to neutralize stomach acid (Antacids e.g. Mylanta, Magnesium Trisilicate)
- Medications to reduce acid production (e.g. Famotidine, Omeprazole)
- Medications to improve stomach emptying (e.g. Metoclopramide)

What you can do

The following are some tips to help you to manage indigestion better in your daily life:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take small frequent meals. Chew foods more slowly and drink less water during meals• Maintain a healthy weight. Regular physical exercise can also improve bloating• Stop smoking. Chemicals in cigarette smoke can worsen indigestion• Wear loose clothing around your waist• For indigestion that worsens at night, place pillows behind your back and sleep in a semi-upright position to prevent back flow of stomach acid• Manage stress through relaxation techniques like deep breathing, as stress can worsen indigestion and gastric discomfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit or avoid foods and beverages that are known to cause indigestion:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Alcohol, citrus fruits, spicy foods, caffeinated and carbonated drinks○ Gas-producing foods (e.g. Cabbage, cauliflower, garlic, beans, onions)○ Fatty foods (e.g. deep fried food, butter, chocolate) especially if you have pancreatic problems○ High fiber foods (e.g. whole grain, dark leafy vegetables, fruits)• Avoid strenuous activities and lying flat at least 1 hour after meals• Avoid eating or drinking beverages that can worsen indigestion, 2-3 hours before going to bed• Do not self-medicate with over-the-counter medications without discussing with your doctor

When to call your cancer care team

Please inform your doctor or nurse if you experience indigestion, or if you experience any of the following that can indicate **worsening** or **complications** of your condition:

- Indigestion that does not improve despite lifestyle modifications and medications
- Decreased appetite, difficulty eating or swallowing, weight loss
- Difficulty passing motion and feeling nauseated
- Blood in your stools or black tarry stools
- Vomiting or coughing up blood

If you have any questions regarding the above, please call the Cancer Helpline at **+65 6225 5655** or approach your doctor or nurse for further details.

The above contents are made available as part of TEMASEK FOUNDATION-ACCESS (Accessible Cancer Care to Enable Support for Survivors) PROGRAMME, a holistic care programme to support cancer patients during their care and recovery journey.

The contents have been approved by the Cancer Education Information Service, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), for people with cancer and their families and caregivers. However, this information serves only as a guide and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment or advice. For specific medical conditions, please seek expert medical advice from your healthcare team.

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