



Tips on Preventive Measures & Management of Gastroparesis

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There are lots of things that affect health and illness. Some you cannot control, but some you can.

Beyond making healthy lifestyle choices, having gastroparesis will likely push you to always be looking for what does and does not help, hurt, and work best for you. It's not always easy, but sorting this out can help you improve your health-related quality of life.

Here are some things to keep in mind when dealing with gastroparesis. Taking some preventive steps can help you ease symptoms, lessen the unwanted effects on your daily life, and enhance your well-being.

Be Aware of Causes and Complications

Not only recognizing the symptoms, but also knowing the cause, and complications that can arise from gastroparesis, can help prevent delays in obtaining appropriate treatment. Although most commonly the cause is unknown (idiopathic), in about 1 in 4 people with gastroparesis it occurs as a complication of long-standing diabetes.

Gastroparesis can also arise:

- As a problem after some surgical procedures (particularly esophageal or upper abdominal surgeries)
- After use of certain medications, such as narcotic pain killers, anticholinergic/antispasmodic agents, calcium channel blockers, some antidepressants, and some diabetes medications
- In association with illnesses that affect the whole body, the nervous system, or connective tissue, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, systemic lupus, and scleroderma

Gastroparesis can lead to:

- Severe dehydration due to persistent vomiting
- Difficulty managing blood glucose (blood sugar) levels in individuals with gastroparesis associated with diabetes
- The formation of clumps of undigested food (bezoars), which can cause nausea, vomiting, or obstruction
- Malnutrition due to poor absorption of nutrients or a low calorie intake
- Adverse events caused by drug interactions (Treatment often may involve taking different classes of drugs to treat several symptoms, such as to reduce nausea, reduce pain, and lower blood glucose levels)

Prevention and Management Tips

- Work with a registered dietician (RD) or nutrition support specialist (nurse or doctor) to design a dietary plan to meet your individual needs; understand how to use and maintain dietary and nutritional therapies.
- Eat frequent, small meals that are low in fat and fiber. Fat, fiber, and large meals can delay stomach emptying and worsen symptoms.
- Keep hydrated and as nutritionally fit as possible.
- If you have diabetes, maintain good glucose control. Irregular stomach emptying can negatively affect blood sugar levels. Keeping your blood sugar under control may help stomach emptying.
- Before having surgery, ask your doctor, surgeon, or health care team about risks involved and weigh these against the benefits. Ask about alternatives.
- Let your doctor and pharmacist know about all medications you are taking – prescription and over-the-counter, as well as any supplements.
- Be aware of possible drug interactions and discuss alternatives with your doctor.
- Understand the possible side effects of your treatments, and know what to do if side effects occur.
- Avoid or reduce alcohol and smoking tobacco. These can slow gastric emptying.
- Engage in regular physical activity as you are able.

Seek appropriate care and take an active role in your health. Working along with your doctor or health care team will help control, reduce, or prevent symptoms and complications.

About IFFGD

The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit education and research organization. We work to promote awareness, scientific advancement, and improved care for people affected by chronic digestive conditions. Our mission is to inform, assist, and support people affected by gastrointestinal disorders. Founded in 1991, we rely on donors to carry out our mission. Visit our websites at: www.iffgd.org.

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