



What is a Small Bowel Obstruction?

The small bowel, also known as the small intestine, is a crucial part of our digestive system. It's where most of our food digestion and nutrient absorption happens. However, sometimes a condition called small bowel obstruction can occur. This is when there's a partial or complete blockage in the small intestine, preventing the normal flow of digested products to the large intestine.

Causes of Small Bowel Obstruction

There are several causes of small bowel obstruction. One common cause is adhesions, which are fibrous bands of tissue that form in the abdomen after surgery. These adhesions can stick to the small intestine and cause a blockage. Hernias are another common cause. A hernia happens when an organ or fatty tissue squeezes through a weak spot in a surrounding muscle or connective tissue. If a part of the small intestine herniates, it can lead to a blockage. Certain diseases can also lead to small-bowel obstruction. For example, Crohn's disease, an inflammatory bowel disease, can cause strictures or intestinal narrowing. Diverticulitis, a condition where small pouches in the digestive system get infected or inflamed, can also cause obstructions.



Symptoms of Small Bowel Obstruction

The symptoms of small bowel obstruction can vary depending on the severity and location of the blockage. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, and vomiting. If you experience these symptoms, especially if they are severe or persistent, you must seek medical attention promptly.

Diagnosis of Small Bowel Obstruction

If a doctor suspects a small bowel obstruction, they will start with a physical exam and ask about your medical history and symptoms. They may also order specific tests and procedures to confirm the diagnosis. These can include imaging tests like X-rays, CT scans, or an ultrasound to visualize the blockage.

Treatment for Small Bowel Obstruction

The treatment for small bowel obstruction depends on the cause and severity of the blockage. In some cases, conservative treatment may be tried first. This can include a temporary liquid diet, medications to relieve symptoms, and close monitoring of your condition. However, surgery may be needed if the obstruction is complete or causes severe symptoms. The surgery aims to remove the blockage and any damaged parts of the intestine. After surgery, most people can return to a regular diet and lifestyle, although some may need to make dietary adjustments or take medications.

Conclusion

Small-bowel obstruction is a serious condition that requires prompt medical attention. By understanding its causes, symptoms, and treatments, you can take steps to maintain your digestive health and seek help when needed. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have concerns about your health. This article helps you understand small bowel obstructions better.

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The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice comprised of experienced Gastroenterologists, Nurse Practitioners, and staff members dedicated to preventing and treating digestive disorders. Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977, having cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems. Our mission is to deliver high-quality gastroenterology services efficiently and cost-consciously. We realize the very sensitive nature of GI illness and understand the necessity to provide our services in an environment that stresses patient privacy and confidentiality and where patient satisfaction is the goal. Appointments can be conveniently scheduled online via our website above. Learn more about digestive issues on Instagram @thedigestivetract

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