



**NHS**

*Ipswich and East Suffolk  
Clinical Commissioning Group*

# Self-care information on indigestion



**Indigestion (also known as dyspepsia) is a term which describes pain or discomfort in your chest or stomach.**

### What causes indigestion?

It is caused by stomach acid irritating the protective lining of the digestive system.

In most cases, there is no underlying medical reason for indigestion.

It is often related to eating, although it can be caused by other factors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, being overweight or taking certain medications.

### What are the symptoms of indigestion?

The main symptom of indigestion is pain or a feeling of discomfort in your upper abdomen. People often experience the associated feeling of burning behind the breastbone (heartburn or acid reflux), but this may occur on its own.

If you have indigestion, you may also have symptoms such as:

- Feeling uncomfortably full or heavy
- Belching or flatulence (passing wind)
- Bringing food back up from your stomach
- Bloating
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting

If you have indigestion only occasionally with mild pain and discomfort, you may not need to visit your GP practice.

## Diet and lifestyle changes

It may be possible to ease your symptoms by making a few simple changes to your diet and lifestyle:

### Healthy weight

If you are overweight or obese, then losing weight through regular exercise and by eating a healthy, balanced diet may help. Being overweight puts more pressure on your stomach, making it easier for stomach acid to be pushed back up into your oesophagus. Contact One Life for advice on weight loss.

### Stop smoking

If you smoke, the chemicals you inhale in cigarette smoke may contribute to your indigestion. For help with stopping smoking call the NHS Stop Smoking Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or contact One Life.

### Diet and alcohol

Make a note of any particular food or drink that seems to make your indigestion worse and avoid these if possible. This may mean eating less rich, spicy and fatty foods; cutting down on drinks that contain caffeine, such as tea, coffee and cola and avoiding or cutting down on alcohol.

### Bedtime

If you tend to experience indigestion symptoms at night, avoid eating for three to four hours before you go to bed.

## Medicines that provide immediate indigestion relief

### **Antacids**

Antacids are a type of medicine that can provide immediate relief for mild to moderate symptoms of indigestion. They work by neutralising the acid in your stomach (making it less acidic), so that it no longer irritates the lining of your digestive system.

The effect of an antacid only lasts for a few hours at a time, so you may need to take more than one dose. Always follow the instructions on the packet to ensure you do not take too much.

Antacids are available as chewable tablets and liquid form. You can buy them from pharmacies and supermarkets. Examples include Rennie® and Tums®.

### **Alginates**

Some antacids also contain a medicine called an alginate. This helps relieve indigestion caused by acid reflux. Alginates form a foam barrier that floats on the surface of your stomach contents, keeping stomach acid in your stomach and away from your oesophagus. You can buy these from pharmacies and supermarkets. Examples include Peptac® liquid.

## Other indigestion treatments

Other indigestion medicines work by reducing the amount of acid your stomach produces. Some of these medicines are available to buy without a prescription:

	Source	Suitability
<b>Omeprazole 10mg tablets</b>	Pharmacies only	Adult only over 18 year old
<b>Pantoprazole 20mg tablets</b>	Pharmacies only	Adult only over 18 year old
<b>Ranitidine 75mg tablets</b>	Supermarkets, shops and pharmacies	Adult and adolescents over 16 years of age

When bought without a prescription, these medicines should only be used short-term. Ask your pharmacist for advice if you think this type of medicine may be helpful for you.

## When to contact your GP practice

For most people, indigestion is mild and infrequent and does not require treatment from a healthcare professional. However, it is important to visit your GP practice if you have recurring indigestion and you:

- Are 55 years old or over
- Have lost a lot of weight without meaning to
- Have increasing difficulty swallowing
- Have persistent vomiting
- Have persistent tiredness
- Have a lump in your stomach
- Have blood in your vomit or blood in your stools
- Have tried treating the indigestion yourself and it has not worked.



### **If you need any further information:**

- Ask your pharmacist
- NHS Choices - [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- One Life - [www.onelifesuffolk.co.uk](http://www.onelifesuffolk.co.uk)

If you would like this information in another language or another format, including audio tape, braille or large print, please call 01473 770 014.

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

**Polish**

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.

**Portuguese**

Jeigu jums reikia suprasi šia, informacija, kita kalba prašom skambinti šiuo numeriu apačioje

**Lithuanian**

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষায় বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

**Bengali**

ئەگەر پێویست بە پارمەتی هەیە یۆ تێگەیشتنی ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانێکی تر تکایە پەیوەندی بە ژمارەی خوارەوە بکە

**Kurdish**

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

**Chinese**

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