

Diet for Functional Abdominal Pain, Nausea, Irritable Bowel



Background

Abdominal pain in children often has several causes including diet, chronic constipation and stress. Anxiety can make abdominal pain and nausea worse, or may cause children not to function well in normal activities such as school. Abdominal pain may arise as a stress response to major life crises such as separation, death or illness in the family. Your child may benefit from counseling in these situations. Many counselors can also offer tips for your child to cope with the pain once it starts so that they may stay in school or other normal activities.

Abdominal pain, nausea and bloating respond to a high fiber, low sugar diet. Our bodies function most efficiently when presented with healthy food choices; problems arise when the diet lacks fiber and contains excessive sugars. Encourage your child's participation by teaching them to read food labels to select suitable cereals and drinks. This not only teaches them about the diet, but also makes them feel that they are participants in the treatment plan.

Increase Fiber

Fiber in the diet comes from whole-grain products, not necessarily from "roughage" from vegetables, salads or fruits. Whole wheat or multigrain breads are a good source of fiber. Breads, cereals and crackers should have *at least 2 grams* of fiber per serving. Fiber content information is now on the side of every box of cereal or bag or bread. Triscuits are a fair source of fiber. Try the cereal, Cracklin Oat Bran, as a dry snack. Fiber One bars are well accepted and found in most grocery stores.

Fiber supplements are available for children who will not eat foods with fiber. This includes *Benefiber* which comes as a powder, easily taken with water or Crystal Light. For children over 4 years of age, Benefiber tablets work well.

Lactose intolerance

Abdominal pain, bloating, gas and diarrhea can result from the lack of enzyme needed to digest the sugar in milk - lactase. Symptoms may occur up to a few hours after ingesting milk products. Significant lactose is found in ice cream, regular hot dogs, processed meats such as bologna, and breaded foods such as chicken nuggets. Cheese and yogurt contain smaller quantities of lactose due to the fermentation they undergo, and may be

tolerated by lactose intolerant patients. There are enzyme replacement tablets such as "Lact-Aid" available at grocery and drug stores. Lact-Aid treated milk and ice cream are readily available.

Gum

Stop all chewing gum. The sorbitol and xylitol cause abdominal pain, as does the associated air swallowing

Decrease certain sugars

Fructose, corn syrup and sorbitol or xylitol are ingredients in many drinks such as fruit punches, iced teas, sodas, apple juice, pear juice, fruit drinks. These cause abdominal pain, nausea, gas and sometimes diarrhea in children. We recommend substituting these drinks with water, milk or 4 oz per day of white grape juice diluted one-half strength with water.

Fructose in particular causes abdominal pain, nausea, bloating, diarrhea, belching and excessive gassiness in children and some adults.

Avoid high fructose drinks such as Capri Sun, Sunny D and Vitamin water.

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We also recommend that you avoid:

- Fruit roll-ups or leathers
- Fake fruit snacks
- Foods with high fructose corn syrup.

Eat only in small quantities:

- Cherries, apples, pears, dates, mangos, oranges, raisins
- Honey

NOTES



Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition 1101 Madison, Suite 800 Seattle, WA 98104 For a free physician referral: 1-800-SWEDISH (1-800-793-3474) www.swedish.org