

Indigestion

What Is Indigestion?

Indigestion, or **dyspepsia**, refers to discomfort or pain in your upper abdomen and is often a symptom of another condition like acid reflux, ulcers, or gallstones. Sometimes, indigestion itself can be a standalone condition with no specific cause but still results in uncomfortable symptoms. These may include bloating, nausea, heartburn, or feeling overly full after eating. If you experience frequent or severe indigestion, it's important to seek medical advice to determine the cause and receive appropriate treatment.

What Causes Indigestion?

Indigestion can result from various factors, including lifestyle habits and underlying medical conditions. Common causes include:

- **Overeating or eating too quickly:** Large or rushed meals can strain your digestion
- **Fatty, spicy, or acidic foods:** These can irritate your stomach lining
- **Alcohol or caffeine:** Both can increase stomach acid production
- **Smoking:** Weakens the lower oesophageal sphincter (LES), making reflux more likely
- **Stress and anxiety:** Emotional stress can disrupt digestion
- **Medications:** Painkillers like NSAIDs, antibiotics, and iron supplements may irritate the stomach

Underlying conditions linked to indigestion include:

- **Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD):** Persistent acid reflux
- **Peptic ulcers:** Open sores in the stomach or small intestine lining
- **Hiatus hernia:** When part of the stomach pushes into the chest, causing reflux
- **Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) infection:** A bacterial infection irritating the stomach
- **Gallstones** or other gallbladder issues

What Are The Symptoms Of Indigestion?

Indigestion symptoms vary, but you may experience:

- A burning or painful sensation in your upper abdomen (heartburn)
- Feeling bloated or full, even after small meals
- Excessive burping or passing wind
- Nausea or a feeling of sickness
- A sour or bitter taste in your mouth caused by acid reflux
- Gurgling sounds or a heavy feeling in your stomach

If these symptoms last for more than three weeks, worsen, or interfere with your daily life, you should consult

a doctor.

When To Seek Urgent Medical Attention

Contact a doctor immediately if you experience:

- Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Vomiting, especially if it contains blood or resembles coffee grounds
- Black or tarry stools (a sign of internal bleeding)
- Severe or persistent abdominal pain

These symptoms could indicate a more serious condition, so timely medical attention is crucial.

How Is Indigestion Investigated?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we use advanced diagnostic tools to determine the cause of indigestion and recommend effective treatment. Tests may include:

- **Endoscopy:** A flexible camera examines the oesophagus, stomach, and duodenum for abnormalities such as ulcers or inflammation
- **Helicobacter pylori testing:** Breath, blood, stool, or biopsy tests detect H. pylori infection
- **Imaging tests:** Ultrasound or X-rays may check for issues with your gallbladder or other organs
- **Oesophageal pH monitoring:** Measures acid levels in your oesophagus to assess reflux

How Can You Manage And Treat Indigestion?

For mild indigestion, lifestyle changes can make a significant difference:

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals to avoid straining your digestion
- Limit fatty, spicy, and acidic foods, as well as caffeine and alcohol
- Avoid lying down immediately after eating—wait 2-3 hours before going to bed
- Maintain a healthy weight to reduce pressure on your stomach
- Quit smoking to improve digestion and reduce reflux

Over-the-counter antacids or acid-reducing medications can provide short-term relief. If symptoms persist or are linked to an underlying condition, your doctor may recommend:

- **Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) or H2 blockers:** To reduce stomach acid production

- **Antibiotics:** To treat H. pylori infection
- **Surgery:** In rare cases, such as repairing a hiatus hernia

Why Choose Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we are experts in diagnosing and treating indigestion and its underlying causes. Our team combines advanced diagnostic tools with personalised treatment plans to address your symptoms effectively. Whether you need a routine test or ongoing care, we are committed to providing high-quality care in a comfortable and supportive environment.

Contact Us

If you're struggling with persistent or severe indigestion, contact Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic today to book a consultation. Early diagnosis and treatment can help you find relief and safeguard your digestive health.