

# Unexplained Weight Loss

## What Is Unexplained Weight Loss?

Losing weight without trying, also known as **unexplained weight loss**, can be concerning. While some fluctuations in weight are normal, losing a significant amount of weight unexpectedly may be a sign of an underlying health issue. At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we can help identify the cause of unexplained weight loss and provide expert care to address your symptoms and improve your well-being.

## What Causes Unexplained Weight Loss?

Unexplained weight loss can happen for many reasons, ranging from lifestyle factors to medical conditions. Common causes include:

- **Digestive issues** such as gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD), gastritis, or coeliac disease
- **Chronic conditions** like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, which affect nutrient absorption
- **Cancer** particularly in the digestive system, such as stomach, bowel, or oesophageal cancer
- **Thyroid problems** an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) can increase your metabolism, leading to weight loss
- **Diabetes** high blood sugar levels can lead to unexplained weight loss
- **Mental health conditions** stress, anxiety, or depression can affect appetite and eating habits
- **Infections** such as tuberculosis or *Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori), a common cause of stomach ulcers
- **Medications** some drugs may cause weight loss as a side effect

Unexplained weight loss is not always serious, but it's important to understand the cause to rule out any underlying medical issues.

## What Symptoms May Accompany Unexplained Weight Loss?

In addition to losing weight without trying, you may notice other symptoms depending on the cause, including:

- Fatigue or weakness
- Loss of appetite or changes in eating habits
- Digestive symptoms like nausea, bloating, or diarrhoea
- Heartburn or acid reflux
- Pain or discomfort in your abdomen
- Blood in your stools or black, tar-like stools
- Persistent cough or difficulty swallowing

If you've lost more than 5% of your body weight in six months without trying, or if you have additional symptoms, it's important to see a doctor.

## When To Seek Urgent Help

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

- Rapid or significant weight loss over a short period
- Difficulty swallowing or persistent abdominal pain
- Vomiting blood or passing black stools
- Severe fatigue or weakness

## How Is Unexplained Weight Loss Investigated?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we use advanced diagnostic tools to determine the cause of unexplained weight loss. Tests may include:

- **Upper GI endoscopy** to examine your oesophagus, stomach, or small intestine for abnormalities like ulcers, inflammation, or tumours
- **Colonoscopy** to investigate your bowel for signs of cancer, polyps, or inflammatory bowel disease
- **Blood tests** to check for nutritional deficiencies, thyroid problems, or infections
- **Imaging tests** such as CT scans, MRI, or ultrasound to assess your digestive organs and identify potential issues
- **Stool tests** to check for hidden blood, infections, or signs of malabsorption

Your consultant will review your medical history, symptoms, and test results to create an accurate diagnosis and tailored treatment plan.

## How Is Unexplained Weight Loss Treated?

Treatment depends on the underlying cause of your weight loss. Common approaches include:

- **Medications** to treat specific conditions like infections, acid reflux, or inflammation
- **Dietary advice** to improve nutrition and address deficiencies, with a focus on balanced meals and sufficient calorie intake
- **Lifestyle changes** such as managing stress and improving sleep to support overall health
- **Specialist care** for conditions like diabetes, cancer, or inflammatory bowel disease, which may require long-term management
- **Surgery** if necessary, for example, to remove tumours or treat blockages in the digestive system

## How Can Unexplained Weight Loss Be Prevented?

While not all cases of unexplained weight loss can be avoided, you can take steps to reduce your risk:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet rich in essential nutrients
- Stay hydrated and avoid skipping meals
- Manage any existing health conditions, such as diabetes or thyroid problems
- Seek medical advice early if you notice changes in your appetite or weight

## Why Choose Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we specialise in diagnosing and treating the causes of unexplained weight loss. Our experienced team uses state-of-the-art equipment to provide accurate diagnoses and effective treatments, ensuring personalised care that addresses your unique needs.

## Contact Us

If you've noticed unexplained weight loss or have concerns about your digestive health, contact Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic today to book a consultation. Early diagnosis and treatment can make a big difference in improving your health and quality of life.