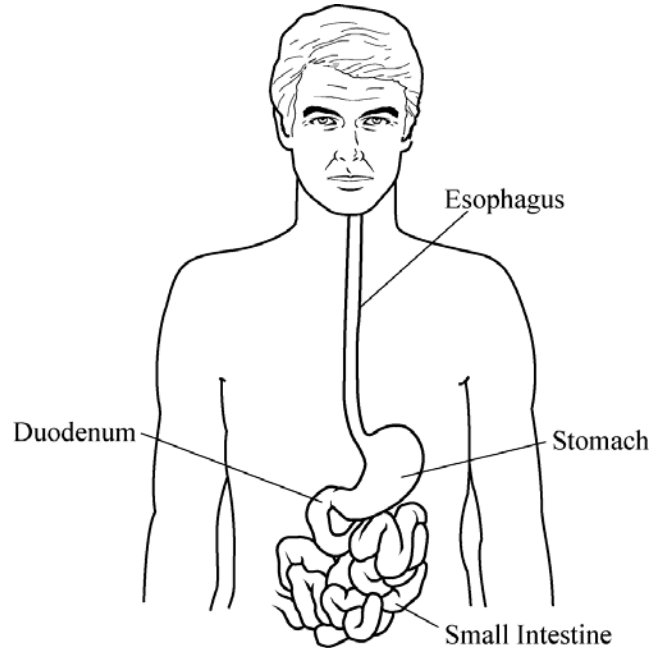


Gastroparesis

Delayed stomach emptying is called gastroparesis. Your stomach has muscles and nerves that work together to push food down into your small intestine. The small intestine breaks down food so that your body has nutrients and energy. This process is called digestion.

Gastroparesis is a condition where the muscles and nerve signals between the stomach and the intestines does not work well. The movement of food from the stomach to the intestines slows down or stops.



What causes gastroparesis?

The cause of this disease is not always known. Some of the most common causes include:

- Diabetes where high blood sugar damages the nerve around the stomach. This is the most common cause of gastroparesis.
- Surgery to the stomach, intestines or abdominal area.
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia.
- Medicines, such as narcotics, that slow the digestive tract.
- Other health conditions, such as autoimmune disease, cancer and infection, or treatments for health problems.

Signs

Signs may be mild to severe. Raw fruits and vegetables, high fiber foods, fatty foods and carbonated drinks can make signs worse. Signs include:

- Nausea

- Vomiting undigested food
- Heartburn
- Bloating
- Pain or spasms in the stomach area
- Lack of appetite
- Feeling full after a few bites of food
- Very high or very low blood sugar levels

Testing

After a physical exam, you may have blood tests. Other tests may be done to check for stomach or intestine blockage or other problems. Tests may include:

- Upper endoscopy: This test allows the doctor to see inside your mouth, esophagus and stomach. A thin tube that has a light and camera inside is put in through your mouth and passed down into your stomach.
- Ultrasound: This test uses sound waves to get pictures of the organs in your abdomen.
- Barium x-ray: During this test, you will be given a drink that has barium in it. The barium shows up on the x-ray to show how well your stomach works.

Treatment

The goal of treatment is to manage the signs you have. Even with treatment, it may not completely stop gastroparesis. Treatment may include:

- Medicines.
- Changing your eating habits, such as eating 6 small meals each day. Your doctor or dietitian may also have you try eating liquid meals to help control your signs.

- Controlling your blood sugars if you have diabetes. You may need to check your blood sugar levels often and work closely with your doctor or diabetes educator to adjust your insulin.
- Surgery

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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