

Gallstones

Gallstones are hard, stone-like deposits that form in the gallbladder. Gallstones can be as small as a grain of sand or as big as a golf ball.

Your gallbladder is a small sac in your abdomen between your stomach and your liver. This small sac stores bile made by your liver. Bile helps your body digest fats.

When you eat fatty foods, the gallbladder squeezes bile out into your small bowel (small intestine). Most gallstones pass through the small bowel without you noticing. Larger gallstones can block the flow of bile if they move from the gallbladder and get stuck along its way to the small intestine. Really large gallstones get stuck in the gallbladder.

When a gallstone gets stuck, it hurts.

What to Expect

How do you know you have gallstones?

Signs of gallstones often come on suddenly, usually after eating fatty food.

Because it comes on quickly, we call it a “gallbladder attack”. Sometimes an attack comes on in the middle of the night.

The most common sign of gallstones is **pain**.

You might feel pain in any of these areas:

- Your stomach.
- In the upper right part of your abdomen, under the ribs.
- In the back between your shoulder blades.
- Under your right shoulder.

The pain can come and go or be constant. It can feel sharp, dull, or like cramps. The pain can last from minutes to several hours.

You might also feel sick to your stomach and throw up.



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Recommended Follow-Up

- Follow up in __ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

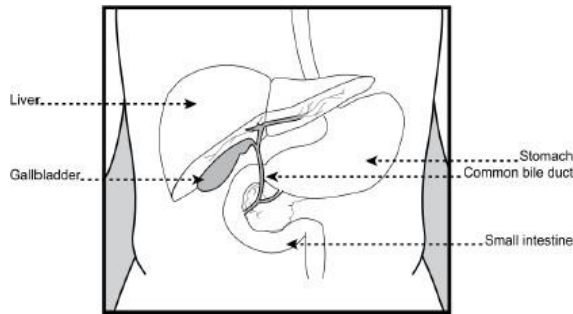
Contact Info

- _____
- _____

Gallstones Discharge Instructions - continued

Notes:

If the gallbladder gets inflamed or infected, you can also have a fever and not feel like eating.



When to Get Help

Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care if:

- Your pain lasts more than 3 hours or does not get better with pain medicine.
- You cannot stop throwing up (vomiting).
- You have chills or a fever over 38.0 °C (100.4 °F).
- Your poo becomes pale, or pee becomes dark.
- You feel lightheaded or you faint.

Go see your family doctor or go to walk-in clinic if:

- You have an attack of steady pain lasting from 30 minutes to a few hours.
- You have a yellowish color to your skin or whites of your eyes, with or without pain.

To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- Go to HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca



How to Care for Yourself at Home

Treatment at home is focused on easing pain and preventing further attacks.

To treat your pain

- Take medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol or store brand) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or store brand).
- Your doctor may give you other pain medication. Take this as directed.

To help prevent gallbladder attacks

- Eat small meals 3 to 4 times a day. Do not skip a meal.
- Choose foods that are low in fat and high in fibre. High fibre foods include vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Lean proteins may also be eaten.
- When you eat dairy products, choose only low-fat dairy products such as low-fat yogurt, cheese, or milk.
- When you need cooking oil, choose canola, olive, or soybean oil.
- Instead of butter, choose non-hydrogenated margarine.
- Drink beverages that are free of margarine.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, drink no more than one alcoholic beverage a day.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

People who are overweight are more likely to get gallstones. Maintain a healthy weight by exercising regularly and eating healthy foods.

People who lose weight rapidly over a short period are more likely to get gallstones. Stay away from fad diets or crash diets.

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Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/gallstones/

Notes:

Additional Information

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