

Rapid Gastric Emptying

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse



National
Institute of
Diabetes and
Digestive
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Diseases

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What is rapid gastric emptying?

Rapid gastric emptying, also called dumping syndrome, occurs when undigested food empties too quickly into the small intestine.

What are the symptoms of rapid gastric emptying?

Early rapid gastric emptying begins either during or right after a meal. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, bloating, cramping, diarrhea, dizziness, and fatigue. Late rapid gastric emptying occurs 1 to 3 hours after eating. Symptoms include hypoglycemia, also called low blood sugar; weakness; sweating; and dizziness. Experiencing both forms of gastric emptying is not uncommon.

What causes rapid gastric emptying?

Rapid gastric emptying is a result of stomach surgery such as fundoplication or gastric bypass. The condition is also seen in people with Zollinger-Ellison syndrome, a rare disorder involving extreme peptic ulcer disease and gastrin-secreting tumors in the pancreas.

How is rapid gastric emptying diagnosed?

Doctors diagnose rapid gastric emptying primarily on the basis of symptoms in people who have had gastric surgery. Tests may be needed to exclude other conditions that have similar symptoms, such as irritable bowel syndrome.

How is rapid gastric emptying treated?

Treatment includes changes in eating habits and medication. People who have rapid gastric emptying should eat several small meals a day that are low in carbohydrates and drink liquids between meals—not with them. People with severe rapid gastric emptying will likely need to take prescribed medicine to slow their digestion. In the most serious cases, doctors may recommend surgery.

You may also find additional information on this topic using the following databases:

The NIDDK Reference Collection is a collection of thousands of materials produced for patients and health care professionals, including fact sheets, brochures, and audiovisual materials. Visit www.catalog.niddk.nih.gov/resources.

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Publications produced by the Clearinghouse are carefully reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts.

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