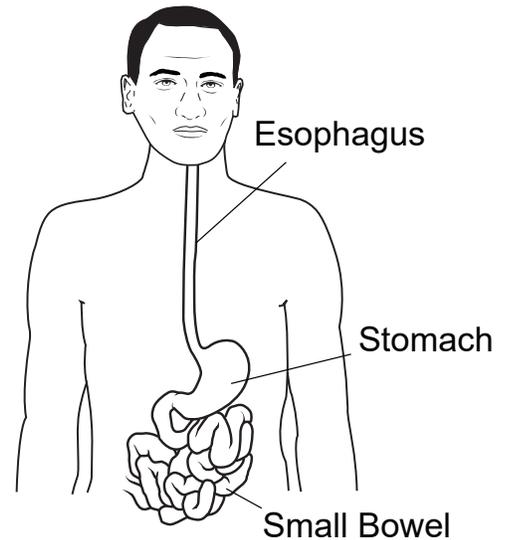


# Gastroparesis

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. Gastroparesis means stomach paralysis.



## Causes

The cause of this disease is not always known. The most common cause is diabetes where high blood sugar damages the nerve around the stomach.

Other cause include:

- Surgery to the stomach, intestines or abdominal area.
- Low thyroid called hypothyroidism
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia.
- Medicines, such as narcotics, that slow the digestive tract.
- Other health conditions, such as autoimmune disease, certain cancers, Parkinson's Disease, stroke and infections.
- Certain 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.

Your doctor may order tests to check how fast your stomach empties.

- Gastric emptying scan: You would eat a small meal that has a very small amount of radioactive material in it. A camera is used to scan the movement of the radioactive material to measure how fast your stomach empties after the meal.
- Wireless capsule monitor: You swallow a small capsule device that sends information to a recorder that wear around your neck or clip to your belt. Your doctor is able to check how fast your stomach empties and how fast food and liquids pass through your intestines. The capsule is passed in your bowel movement.

## Treatment

The goal of treatment is to manage the signs you have. Sometimes treating the cause may stop gastroparesis. Sometimes treatment 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. You may also need to avoid alcohol, carbonated drinks and limit high fiber and high fat foods.
- 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.
- Gastric electrical stimulation that uses a battery powered device to send signals to muscles in the wall of the stomach. It helps to decrease nausea and vomiting.
- Surgery to place feeding tubes if other treatments are not helping.

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