



STING OR BITE

Red lump or patches on the skin that are itchy, swollen and/or painful

CAUSES

CHIGGER BITE

Chiggers are the larvae of harvest mites. They feed on areas with low vegetation but attach themselves to animals to get protein. They normally attach themselves to the opening of a hair shaft and inject saliva into the skin rather than burrowing in it. Parts of the body which are more often affected are the areas where skin is thinnest such as the ankles, wrist, thighs, groin or waist. Chiggers stay on a person's skin for one to four days depending on when the feeding is complete. Afterwards, they drop back to the ground to develop into full-grown harvest mites. Some people may experience an allergic reaction when first bitten.

Symptoms:

- Red, itchy lesions in the abovementioned areas after having visited a wooded or grassy area

DO:

- Try washing the affected areas with dog shampoo and rinse thoroughly.
- The dermatologist can provide ointments to dry up and heal the sores that are present though they cannot prevent new ones from appearing.

DON'T:

- Do not scratch the itchy area. Try putting ice on the local area to soothe itching.

OTHER CAUSES

Other possible causes may include fire ants, horseflies, mosquitoes, scorpions or ticks.

STOMACH PAIN

Pain in the stomach

GALL BLADDER DISEASE

The gall bladder is one of the body's glands which uses the bile secreted by the liver to digest and absorb fat into our bodies. It is responsible for breaking down certain substances that would otherwise be indigestible.

Gall stones are solid, pebble-like masses which accumulate in the gall bladder. They are one of the most common gall bladder problems that a person may encounter. Generally, if a person has gall stones that are not causing any symptom, a surgical procedure to remove them is not usually recommended by physicians.

When the stones start to let their presence known, surgery is necessary as stones may cause other complications. It is believed to be caused by an unhealthy high-fat, high-cholesterol and low-fiber diet.

Symptoms:

- Intense abdominal pain in the area under the ribcage, on the person's right side
- Nausea and vomiting

DO:

- Seek medical help if symptoms are felt.
- Avoid fatty foods.



STOMACH PAIN

Pain in the stomach

CAUSES

SMALL BOWEL OBSTRUCTION

The small bowel is commonly known as the small intestine. Its normal length in adults is 21 feet and an obstruction may indicate a need for hospitalization or surgery. Obstructions in the small intestine may cause a part of the intestine to die because of the restricted blood flow.

One major cause of obstruction is *post-operative adhesions*. After a surgical operation, a person may develop scar tissue across sections of the intestine which, in turn, traps blood flow. This can lead to *Hernia* (protrusion of an organ or the muscular wall of an organ through the cavity that normally contains it), *volvulus* (in which the intestine is twisted abnormally), *intussusception* (in which the intestine folds onto itself and cuts the normal flow of partly digested material and in turn, restricting blood flow), and cancer. This can be life-threatening.

Symptoms:

- An abdomen that may feel tender and appear swollen
- Abdominal cramps, vomiting, a low-grade fever and failure to pass gas or have bowel movements
- Dehydration indicated by dry skin, coated tongue, weakness and confusion

DO:

- Seek medical help immediately. This condition is life-threatening.
- For post-operative patients: go into a high-fiber low-fat diet to reduce the risks of a small bowel obstruction. This change, however, must be monitored by a nutritionist who will advise that person to gradually increase fiber intake as having sudden increases may also cause obstruction.

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

See page 126.

PANCREATITIS

Pancreatitis, the inflammation of the pancreas, is caused by the autodigestion of pancreatic tissue by the organ's own enzymes. There are two types of pancreatitis – *acute*, in which the specific cause is unknown, and *chronic*, to which alcoholism is linked. Pancreatitis is a serious condition and medical help is necessary.

Symptoms:

- Abdominal pain that may be mild or severe but may spread to the person's back or chest
- Fever, malaise, nausea and vomiting
- For chronic pancreatitis sufferers: bulky, fatty, foul-smelling stools, weight loss, fever malaise, nausea and vomiting

DO:

- Consult a gastroenterologist.

DON'T:

- Do not drink large quantities of alcohol.

OTHER CAUSES

Other causes may include gastritis or peptic ulcer disease, gastroesophageal reflux disease or kidney stones or infection.