

Stomach Polyps

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Polyps are extra tissue growth inside your body. One of the places polyps can grow is in the stomach.

Most polyps are not cancerous (benign). Many times, polyps smaller than peas do not cause problems. Larger polyps may be cancer (malignant) or can turn into cancer.

Who is at Risk

Anyone can get polyps. You are at an increased risk of getting stomach polyps if you:

- are older than age 50
- have had polyps before
- have a family history of polyps
- have a family history of cancer in the stomach
- have taken medicines to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) for a long time
- have a bacterial stomach infection (H. pylori)
- eat a lot of fatty foods
- smoke
- drink alcohol
- do not get regular exercise
- are overweight.

Symptoms

Often, small polyps cause no symptoms. Larger polyps can cause:

- abdominal pain
- upset stomach (nausea)
- low blood iron (anemia)
- blood in the stool.

Call your health care provider if you have any of the above symptoms.

What Your Health Care Provider Will Do

Your health care provider will do some or all of the following to confirm polyps:

- ask your family history
- schedule you for an endoscopy (The health care provider puts a thin, flexible tube into your esophagus and down your stomach. This endoscope has a light on the end of it which will help your health care provider see into your stomach.)
- take a small tissue sample (biopsy). This can be done during an endoscopy. If a sample is taken, it will be sent to the lab for testing.

Treatment

- In most cases, your health care provider will remove the polyp(s). This can be done during an endoscopy. The polyp(s) will be tested for cancer.
- If the polyp(s) were caused by *H. pylori*, your health care provider may also prescribe antibiotics to kill the bacteria.
- If the polyp(s) did not cause symptoms, your health care provider might not remove the polyp(s) and recommend regular screening tests to make sure there is no growth.

How to Prevent Polyps

There are no sure ways to prevent getting stomach polyps but you can lower your risk if you:

- eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and cut down on fatty foods
- eat foods high in fiber and B vitamins (whole-grain breads; brown rice; black, navy and kidney beans)

- do not smoke
- do not drink too much alcohol
- get regular exercise (at least 30 minutes on most days)
- lose weight (if you need to).

If you have a personal or family history of polyps, stomach cancer or both, your health care provider may want you to have regular screening tests.

Whom to Call With Questions

Call your health care provider if you have questions about stomach polyps.