

What Is Colonic (Large Bowel) Obstruction?

A colonic obstruction is a partial or complete blockage of the bowel that prevents the contents of the intestine from passing through.

How do I know if I have a Colonic Obstruction?

- Abdominal swelling (distention).
 - Abdominal fullness.
 - Too much gas.
 - Abdominal pain and cramping.
 - Constipation.
 - Diarrhea.
 - Not able to pass gas or stool.
 - Vomiting.
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What causes a Colonic Obstruction?

Causes of an *ileus* (stomach slows down or stops working) may include:

- ***Gastroenteritis*** (infection of the intestines caused by germs or virus).
- Chemical, electrolyte, or mineral imbalances (such as decreased potassium levels).
- Side effects of abdominal surgery.
- ***Mesenteric ischemia*** (a medical problem where there is a decreased blood supply to the intestines).
- Infections inside the abdomen (such as appendicitis).
- Kidney or lung disease.
- Use of certain medicines, usually narcotics.

Physical causes of intestinal obstruction may include:

- ***Adhesions*** (tissues that are stuck together) or scar tissue that forms after surgery.
- Hernias.
- Foreign bodies (items that are swallowed that block the intestines).
- Gallstones (rare).
- Tumors.
- Impacted (stuck) stool.
- ***Intussusception*** (part of the intestine folds and slides into another).
- ***Volvulus*** (twisted intestine).

How can I fix it?

Treatment for a colonic obstruction is determined by what caused it. Treatment typically involves hospitalization. During the hospitalization the patient will usually have a ***nasogastric tube “NG Tube”***. ***A NG tube is a*** small tube that is placed through the nose and into the stomach or intestine. This tube is placed to help ease abdominal swelling and let the bowels rest. Treatment depends on the cause and type of blockage.

1. ***Partial Mechanical Obstruction:*** If some food or liquids can still pass through the intestines and stomach then it is typically treated with a low-fiber diet to help the bowels rest.
2. ***Complete Mechanical Obstruction:*** If nothing can pass through the intestines then surgery is necessary. Surgery involves removing the part of the bowel that is blocked and any part of the bowel that may have been damaged.
3. ***Paralytic Ileus (stomach stops working)*** if an ileus is the cause of the obstruction then the patient is admitted and watched in the hospital for a few days. If the ileus does not get better on its own then medicines may be given to help move food and fluids through the intestines. If the ileus is caused by an illness or medicine, the illness will be treated and/or the medicine will be stopped.

How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?
