

What Is Enterocutaneous Fistula?

An enterocutaneous fistula is an opening from the intestines to the top of the skin that leaks fluids or stool. This liquid usually comes from your stomach or intestines.

How do I know if I have Enterocutaneous Fistula?

Symptoms of an enterocutaneous fistula include:

- Intestinal fluid or stool leaking through and onto the skin (seen as drainage coming from the stomach).
 - The stomach becomes unable to absorb nutrients (malabsorption).
 - Dehydration (not drinking enough water).
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What causes Enterocutaneous Fistula?

- Problems from abdominal surgery
 - Trauma resulting from penetrating wounds (such as stabbings or gunshot)
 - Inflammatory disorders (Crohn's disease)
 - Side effect of radiation to the abdomen or pelvis (can occur years after treatment)
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How can I fix it?

Treatment for an enterocutaneous fistula depends on the size, location, patient's history, cause of fistula, and problems related to the fistula. At times an enterocutaneous fistula closes on its own after a few weeks to months. If problems happen and/or the fistula does not heal on its own after a couple of months surgery will be needed.

If the enterocutaneous fistula is draining a large amount of gastrointestinal (stomach and intestinal) fluid, the fistula is managed as a stoma (an opening in the belly for getting rid of wastes). The use of an ostomy device may also be used. Sometimes patients may need nutritional support with TPN (intravenous source of nutrition).

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?
