

Dumping Syndrome

Dumping syndrome is also called rapid stomach emptying. It occurs when food, especially sugar, moves too fast or is “dumped” from the stomach to the small intestine. It is most likely to be a problem when all or part of the stomach has been removed or bypassed. Other surgeries to the stomach or esophagus, or any condition that impairs how the stomach stores and empties foods, such as nerve damage, can also cause dumping syndrome.

It is common to find dumping syndrome alarming at first, but it is not life threatening. Most often dumping syndrome improves with time and with adjustments to diet. In some less common but more serious cases, medication or surgery may be needed. Work closely with your doctor if symptoms continue.

While most people have symptoms soon after eating, symptoms can happen up to three hours later and can range from mild to severe. Each is related to the “dumping” of foods and beverages into the small intestine. About 75 percent of people with dumping syndrome report early stage symptoms and about 25 percent report late stage symptoms. Some people have symptoms of both stages.

- **Early Stage:** within 10-60 minutes of eating; symptoms can last about an hour.
 - Individuals may have feelings of fullness or nausea. This is related to the widening of the small intestine. It is in part from food and liquid moving from the stomach. It is also from rapid movement of additional fluid from the bloodstream to the intestines to dilute the food mixture. Hormones normally released into the small intestine to help digestion, affect blood pressure.
 - At this time, individuals may also have flushing, rapid heartbeat, faintness, sweating, or feel the need to sit or lie down.
 - Individuals may also have abdomen bloating, cramps, pain, increased gas and/or diarrhea. These symptoms are most likely related to a decreased absorption of food in the small intestine (because food is moving more quickly) as well as fermentation of foods in the colon.
- **Late Stage:** 1-3 hours after a meal.
 - Individuals may have low blood sugar symptoms: feel sweaty, anxious, weak, shaky, or hungry, or have difficulty concentrating. The fast delivery of simple sugars into the blood stream causes a significant rise in insulin which then results in a rapid drop of the blood sugar level. The blood sugar may not actually be “too low” but the sudden change in blood sugar can still cause the similar symptoms.
 - This can be particularly challenging for those with diabetes. Work closely with your doctor and diabetes educator to help manage your blood sugars.

Dietitian: _____

Phone: _____

Facility: _____

General Diet Tips

Diet changes can reduce or eliminate symptoms for most people with dumping syndrome.

- Eat smaller meals. 6 small meals may be better tolerated than 3 large meals.
- Keep portions small.
- Cut food into small pieces. Chew food well before swallowing.
- Avoid overeating. Stop eating when you first begin to feel full.
- Avoid fluids with meals or less than 30 minutes before a meal. Drink beverages 30-60 minutes after eating solid food. Be sure to drink enough liquids in small amounts between meals throughout the day.
- High protein, moderate-fat foods are recommended. Examples include: baked or broiled meats (not fried or overly fatty), eggs (not fried), low fat or fat free cheeses and cottage cheese
- Increase the thickness of food as it is digested by eating high fiber foods such as whole grains, whole-grain bread and cereal products, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds.
- Try foods containing pectin. This is a type of fiber which is in many fruits and vegetables including: peaches, plums, apples, pears, carrots, and peas.
- Use pectin, guar gum, psyllium, or methylcellulose containing fiber supplements.
 - Those with esophageal or gastric outlet narrowing problems should use caution with large food particles and fiber supplements to avoid an obstruction.
- Avoid highly sweet foods and beverages. This includes: soda pop, fruit drinks, sweetened coffees, juice, cakes, cookies, pastries, candy, ice cream, sweetened cereals, or any other food with a high amount of sugar.
- Avoid foods where sugar, or a form of sugar, is listed as one of the first 3 ingredients on the food label. (Examples include: corn syrup, honey, cane juice, glucose, dextrose, sucrose, and fructose).
 - Artificial sweeteners are okay to use in moderation.
- Avoid fried, greasy or fatty foods.
- Use low-fat cooking methods. Prepare meal and other foods by broiling, baking, steaming or grilling.
- Avoid acidic foods. Many find tomatoes and citrus fruits hard to tolerate.
- Use caution when consuming dairy foods. Milk and ice cream may be poorly tolerated. Cheeses and low sugar yogurt are generally better tolerated.
- Lie down after eating for about 1 hour. This may help prevent lightheadedness.
- Decreased activity may help slow gastric emptying. Avoid activity after meals, choose to be active prior to meals instead.
- Avoid alcohol. If you do drink alcohol, have it with food to minimize blood sugar swings.

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This handout is meant for use during an appointment with a registered dietitian only and is not intended for use by other clinicians.

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