

# Small Bowel Obstruction

## What is a small bowel obstruction?

A small bowel obstruction occurs when there is a partial or complete blockage of the **small bowel**, also called the **small intestine**. The small intestine is a part of the digestive system that connects your stomach to your large intestine. The blockage keeps food, liquid, and gas from moving through the small intestine in a normal way.

## What causes it?

Small bowel obstructions can be caused by:

- Scar tissue
- Certain types of cancer
- Hernias
- Twisting of a part of the intestine
- Inflammation

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Signs and symptoms of a small bowel obstruction may include:

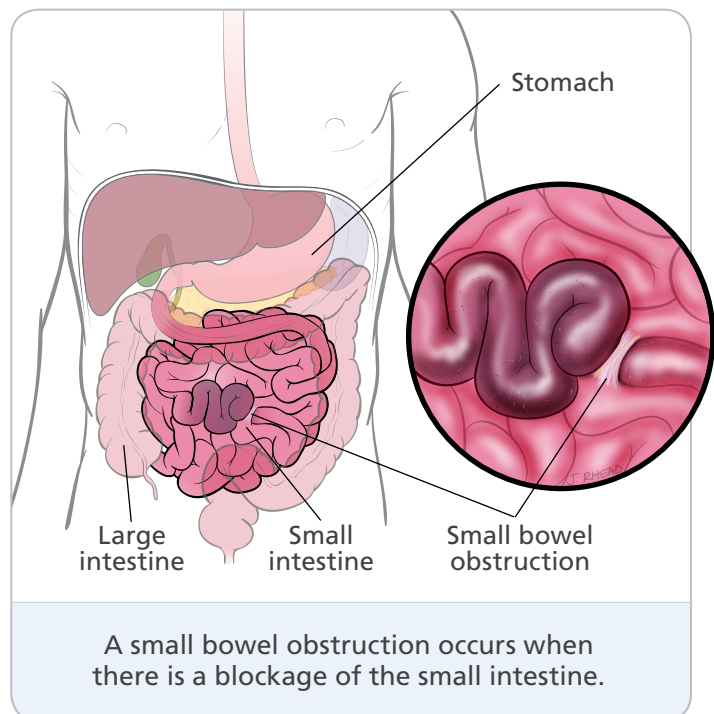
- Constipation
- Pain and swelling in the abdomen (belly)
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty passing gas
- Vomiting

## How is it diagnosed?

A small bowel obstruction can be diagnosed based on your signs and symptoms, and an imaging test.

### When should I call my doctor?

**Call your doctor right away if you have severe and constant belly pain.** This could be a sign that blood flow has been cut off from your intestines. Or, it could mean there is a hole in your intestine. Both of these conditions are medical emergencies.



## How is it treated?

The treatment for a small bowel obstruction usually requires hospitalization, but it depends on the cause of the obstruction.

### Partial Obstruction

A partial obstruction, in which some food and liquid can still pass through, may not require treatment right away. Your doctor may recommend a low-fiber diet that is easier to digest. If the blockage cannot clear on its own, you may need surgery to remove it.

### Complete Obstruction

**If food and liquid cannot pass through your small intestine, you may need surgery right away.** The type of surgery needed depends on the cause and location of the blockage. The surgical procedure usually involves removing the blockage and any part of your intestine that is permanently damaged.

**My follow-up appointment**

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions for my doctor

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