



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

What is Cholecystitis?

Cholecystitis (ko-lee-sis-ti-tis) is a painful swelling of the gallbladder. The gallbladder is a small pouch below the liver just under the ribs. The liver makes fluid, called bile, which is used to help digest food. The bile flows from the liver into the gallbladder, where it is stored. After a meal, bile flows from the gallbladder to the small intestine to help digest food.

The gallbladder is connected to the liver and the small intestine by tubes, called ducts. Sometimes small, hard stones form in the gallbladder. These gallstones can get trapped in the ducts and block the flow of bile. When bile is trapped in the gallbladder, it can cause an infection. Gallstones cause about 90 percent of cases of this infection, called Cholecystitis (ko-lee-sis-ti-tis). **Cholecystitis can become a very serious illness and can lead to death if not treated.**

What are other causes for Cholecystitis?

There are other, less common causes for Cholecystitis. Certain conditions can affect how well the gallbladder can fill and empty, including:

- Injury
- Long periods of dieting, sedation and inability to move
- High levels of the hormone estrogen in the body

This can affect women who are pregnant, taking birth control pills or taking hormones for menopause.

Who is most at risk for Cholecystitis?

- Fair-skinned women over 40
- Older men and women
- Native Americans

The following are also risk factors:

- Eating a diet high in calories and fat
- Being overweight
- Rapid weight loss
- Diabetes

What are the signs of Cholecystitis?

The most common sign of Cholecystitis is pain in the upper right belly (abdomen), just below the ribs. This often happens after a person eats a fatty meal. The pain can travel to the back, to the shoulder area or between the shoulder blades.

Other common signs

- Loss of appetite
- Chills
- Fever
- A yellow color in the skin and eyes (jaundice)

What are the tests for Cholecystitis?

- Blood tests
- X-rays
- HIDA scan that takes pictures of the flow of bile

What is the treatment for Cholecystitis?

Sometimes Cholecystitis clears up on its own. If it does not, a person must go to the hospital. Treatment may include:

- Feeding by an IV tube
- Antibiotics to fight infection
- Medications to help with pain, cramping and vomiting
- Suctioning out the stomach to help stop vomiting

Surgery is the next step if these treatments do not cure the problem. Surgery is performed either to drain or remove the gallbladder.

The newest type of surgery is done through four small cuts (incisions) in the belly. A small, thin tube with a tiny light and camera goes in one cut. It is called a laparoscope. It shows the gallbladder on a screen. The doctor then uses tools through the other cuts and removes the gallbladder.

How do I take care of myself at home?

- Eat a low-fat diet. You may be more sensitive to fatty, fried foods after surgery.
- Review your medicines with your doctor and nurse. Be aware of their possible side effects and know when to call your doctor.
- Do not lift 10 pounds or more for six weeks.
- Do not strain for six weeks.
- Walk every day, with your doctor's permission.
- Keep your doctor appointments.

How can I find a Doctor?

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in treating Cholecystitis and other gallbladder problems. To contact one of our doctors, please call:

Physician Referral Line at 1.800.223.8662

Visit our website at www.stvincentcharity.com

St. Vincent Charity Hospital

2351 E. 22nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
216.861.6200
TTY: Ohio Relay 1.800.750.0750

The HealthCare Center at Saint Luke's Pointe

11201 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44104
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