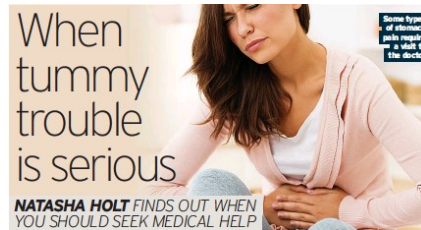


## - Stomach

# When tummy trouble is serious

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“A hard or bloated stomach is a common issue and is often due to excess gas in the bowels caused by digestive issues or food intolerances,” says Dr Daniel Gordon, GP.



Occasionally a hard stomach can be more worrying, so if it lasts for longer than a few days, see your GP.

“It could suggest the accumulation of fluid, which can happen with certain cancers,” adds Dr Gordon.

“So your doctor will arrange tests to rule these out.”

Severe pain came on suddenly

“Any severe tummy pain which comes on suddenly should prompt you to seek urgent medical attention as it could get worse without treatment,” warns Dr Gordon.

“Agonising pain might indicate a serious problem with one of the organs in your abdomen, caused by conditions such as appendicitis, gallstones or a bleeding stomach ulcer.

“It’s essential that tests are conducted quickly to determine the cause so you can start treatment.”

You’re pregnant

Stomach pain is obviously worrying for pregnant women but fortunately it’s very common and most likely caused by constipation or the ligaments around the womb stretching as it expands.

“However any moderate or severe abdominal pain in pregnancy, or pain coupled with other symptoms such as bleeding, should be taken seriously as it could indicate an ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage or placental rupture,” says Dr Gordon.

Pregnant women should speak to their midwife immediately if they are feeling concerned.

Your stools are dark and whiffy

“Black, sticky, smelly poos, which are often described as looking like tar, may indicate bleeding somewhere near the top of your gastrointestinal tract, for example from a bleeding stomach ulcer,” warns Dr Gordon.

“This is because the blood gets partially digested as it passes through your bowels so it doesn’t appear as red in the toilet.”

See your GP, but if you’ve started taking iron tablets bear in mind these can cause black stools.

Vomit looks a bit like ground coffee

Vomit that looks like coffee grounds may mean bleeding in the stomach.

“Again, the blood changes appearance because it clots in the stomach,” explains Dr Gordon.

“This is a serious symptom and should prompt you to seek urgent medical attention. In many cases a camera can be passed through the

“Pain which spreads to the groin is often associated with problems in your urinary tract,” says Dr Gordon.

“One of the most common causes is a urinary tract infection (UTI), which usually causes additional symptoms such as a burning feeling when passing urine.

“If the pain is severe and causes cramping it could be due to kidney stones.” See your GP for pain relief and an investigation.

It hurts to touch your stomach

Pain when you touch or press on your stomach may be a sign of a deadly condition called peritonitis.

“Peritonitis is caused by bacteria entering the lining of your tummy, usually from a hole in an organ, such as a burst appendix or ruptured colon,” explains Dr Gordon.

Seek emergency help quickly.

You can’t swallow food

“Stomach pain accompanied by difficulty swallowing is most likely to be caused by problems in the oesophagus,” says Dr Gordon.

“But one of the most important diagnoses to rule out in this case is blockages caused by cancer.”