

Abdominal Pain - Stress Related

Definition

- Pain or discomfort in the stomach (abdomen or belly)
- The stomach pains occur when your child is worried about something
- This is often called the "worried stomach"

Health Information

Symptoms

- The pain occurs in the pit of the stomach or near the belly button.
- The pain is mild to moderate.
- The pain is real but harmless.

Pain Scale

- **Mild:** Your child feels pain and tells you about it. But, the pain does not keep your child from any normal activities. School, play and sleep are not changed.
- **Moderate:** The pain keeps your child from doing some normal activities. It may wake him or her up from sleep.
- **Severe:** The pain is very bad. It keeps your child from doing all normal activities.

Causes

- The most common cause of frequent stomach pains is stress and worries.
- These children tend to be sensitive and very serious. They often are model children.
- This can make them more at risk to the normal stresses of life.

Prevention of Stress

- Teach your child the importance of getting adequate sleep
- Daily exercise releases chemicals that protect from stress.
- Do something fun and relaxing every day. Examples are music, a walk, reading, and talking with friends.

Care Advice

1. **Overview:**
 - Over 10% of children have a "worried stomach".
 - Your child can learn to control it.
 - Here is some care advice that should help.
2. **Relax:**
 - To treat the pain, help your child get very relaxed.
 - Laying down in a quiet place and taking slow deep breaths will help. Make the belly go up and down with each breath.
 - Then try to relax all the muscles in the body. Think about something pleasant. Listening to CDs that teach how to relax might also help.
3. **Talking:**
 - Help your child talk about events that trigger the stomach pain.
 - Talk to your child about how to cope with these the next time around.
 - Help your child worry less about things he or she can't control.

4. **Sleep:**
 - Make sure your child gets enough sleep. This should be at least 8 hours each night.
 - Stress is easier to handle if you get adequate sleep.
5. **What to Expect:**
 - If your child can relax, the pain may be gone in 30 minutes. If not, the pain may last 2-3 hours.
 - A "worried stomach" won't go away. Many adults have it.
 - The only way to reduce attacks is to learn to deal with normal stresses.
6. **Return to School:**
 - Make sure that your child doesn't miss any school because of stomach pains.
 - Stressed children tend to want to stay home when the going gets rough.

Call Your Doctor If

- Stomach ache becomes worse than usual
- Stomach ache lasts longer than usual
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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