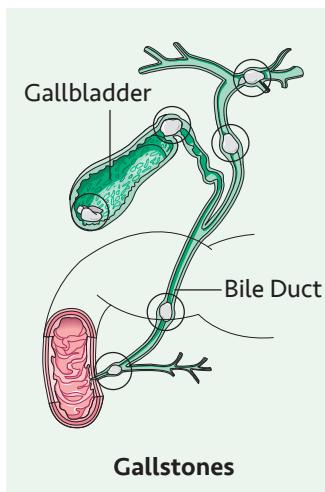




Gallstones

The gallbladder stores bile. This substance helps digest fats.

Gallstones form when bile hardens into pieces of stone-like material. These deposit in the gallbladder or bile ducts (which carry bile to the small intestine). The stones can range in size from less than a pinhead to 3 inches across.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Feeling bloated and gassy, especially after eating fried or fatty foods.
- Steady pain in the upper right abdomen lasting 20 minutes to 5 hours.
- Pain between the shoulder blades or in the right shoulder.
- Indigestion. Nausea. Vomiting. Severe abdominal pain with fever. Sometimes a yellow color to the skin and/or the whites of the eyes.

{Note: Gallstone symptoms can be hard to tell apart from heart-related or other serious problems. A doctor should evaluate any new symptoms.}

CAUSES

- Obesity and excess body fat
- Men 60 years and older and women between 20 and 50 years old.
- Being female due to effects of estrogen and progesterone hormones.
- Genetics. People of Native American or Mexican descent and having a family history of gallstones.

TREATMENT

- Surgery to remove the gallbladder. This is the most common treatment. You can still digest foods without a gallbladder.
- Healthy diet with smaller and more frequent meals.

TRIAGE QUESTIONS

Do you have any of these problems?

- The skin and the whites of your eyes are yellow in color.
- Pain in your upper right abdomen with vomiting and/or a fever. Or, the pain goes away and comes back.

NO

YES ➔ SEE DOCTOR

USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

Same as with treatment following gallbladder removal:

- Eat a healthy, low-fat, high-fiber diet.
- Eat smaller and more frequent meals.

- Get to and stay at a healthy body weight. If you are overweight, lose weight slowly (1 to 1-1/2 pounds per week). Do not follow a rapid weight loss diet unless under strict medical guidance.