

Digestive System Disorders

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about various disorders of the digestive system. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Upper Digestive Tract Disorders

Gastroesophageal reflux, also commonly known as heartburn or acid reflux, is a disorder that affects the upper digestive tract. This disorder occurs when chyme (which is very acidic) regurgitates into the esophagus because the sphincter doesn't properly close. This is what causes that heartburn sensation, though it doesn't actually have anything to do with your heart.



TERM TO KNOW

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

A disorder in which chyme backs up in the esophagus due to the lower esophageal sphincter not closing properly.

2. Liver Disorders

The next two disorders are disorders that affect the liver.

2a. Hepatitis

Hepatitis is the inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis can be caused by viruses, which are transmitted by body fluids such as blood or semen. It can be caused by other factors, such as obesity, drugs, and environmental toxins.

There are a few different types of hepatitis that have differing viral causes: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Fortunately, there are vaccines against these types of hepatitis.



TERM TO KNOW

Hepatitis

A disease that causes inflammation of the liver and can lead to malfunctioning of the liver if left untreated.

2b. Cirrhosis

Cirrhosis is another disorder that affects the liver, causing it to become inflamed. This is typically due to heavy alcohol consumption over a person's life. What happens is heavy alcohol consumption will damage liver cells, and then those damaged liver cells are replaced by connective tissue.



TERM TO KNOW

Cirrhosis

Scar tissue on the liver most often due to heavy alcohol consumption over time.

3. Colon Disorders

The next two disorders are disorders that affect the colon.

3a. Crohn's Disease

Crohn's disease is an inflammation disorder that affects the small intestine, as well as other parts of the body. Crohn's disease is not curable, but it is treatable. It is an inflammation disorder that can have an effect on the colon. Sometimes this will become so bad that a part of the intestine might have to be removed to help treat the disease.



TERM TO KNOW

Crohn's Disease

A disorder in which the intestine and other organs become inflamed; as a result, a portion of the intestine may have to be removed.

3b. Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is a cancer of the colon or rectum. This is a fairly common type of cancer, but fortunately, it can be detected by something called a colonoscopy. This is where a little camera is inserted into the colon to search for polyps, which are these growths that can be found on the colon wall and are a warning sign of possible colorectal cancer.



DID YOU KNOW

Colorectal cancer responsible for about 20% of all cancer deaths yearly in the United States.



TERM TO KNOW

Colorectal Cancer

Cancer of the colon or rectum.

4. Malabsorption Disorders

These last few disorders are malabsorption disorders. These disorders occur when certain vitamins or nutrients are not properly absorbed by the digestive system.

4a. Lactose Intolerance

In **lactose intolerance**, the enzyme lactase is deficient. Lactase is an enzyme that allows for the absorption of lactose. Lactose is a simple sugar (a disaccharide) found in dairy products, such as cheese, milk, ice cream, et cetera. Without this lactase enzyme, lactose cannot be digested and absorbed, which causes intestinal complications.



TERM TO KNOW

Lactose Intolerance

A disorder in which the lactase enzyme is deficient, so lactose cannot be digested and absorbed properly.

4b. Cystic Fibrosis

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition in which the pancreas doesn't provide enzymes for normal digestion and absorption of fats. This disorder also affects the respiratory system.



TERM TO KNOW

Cystic Fibrosis

A genetic disorder in which the pancreas doesn't produce enzymes necessary to digest and absorb fats.

4c. Diarrhea & Constipation

The last two disorders are diarrhea and constipation, which means water is not being properly absorbed. Either too much water is absorbed (constipation), or not enough water is absorbed (diarrhea), leading to one of these two conditions.

Diarrhea is when an irritant (such as bacteria, stress, infection) will cause the small intestine to secrete more water than the large intestine can absorb. This will result in diarrhea because the feces are mixed with an excess amount of water. This is something that can be frightening for children because if too much water is excreted from the body, it can lead to dehydration.

Constipation is the opposite of diarrhea and occurs when feces remains in the rectum for too long, causing too much water absorption. Then feces becomes very hard and compressed, and difficult to pass.



SUMMARY

This lesson has been an overview of various digestive disorders and health. Specifically, you learned about **upper digestive tract disorders** such as gastroesophageal reflux, **liver disorders** such as **hepatitis** and **cirrhosis**, **colon disorders** such as **Crohn's disease** and **colorectal cancer**, and **malabsorption disorders** such as **lactose intolerance**, **cystic fibrosis**, **diarrhea**, and **constipation**.

Keep up the learning and have a great day!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR AMANDA SODERLIND



TERMS TO KNOW

Cirrhosis

Scar tissue on the liver most oftenly due to heavy alcohol consumption over time.

Colorectal Cancer

Cancer of the colon or rectum.

Crohn's Disease

A disorder in which the intestine and other organs become frequently inflamed; as a result, a portion of the intestine may have to be removed.

Cystic Fibrosis

A genetic disorder in which the pancreas doesn't produce enzymes necessary to digest and absorb fats.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

A disorder in which chyme backs up in the esophagus due to the lower esophageal sphincter not closing properly.

Hepatitis

A disease that causes inflammation of the liver and can lead to malfunctioning of the liver if left untreated.

Lactose Intolerance

A disorder in which the lactase enzyme is deficient, so lactose cannot be digested and absorbed properly.