

Justin Vaughan, M.D.

Can our diet, especially during this time of year, cause gallbladder issues?

0:06

For sure fried fatty, greasy spicy foods that we can see that fairs and festivals can have increased incidence of having some biliary colic or gallbladder attack symptoms, causing some right upper quadrant pain, maybe some nausea associated with that type of food.

What causes a gallbladder attack?

0:27

In our diet at festivals or in everyday life if we eat fried, fatty, greasy or spicy foods, they cause the gallbladder to want to contract to release bile and that stimulus of squeezing the gallbladder if there are stones present there. Sometimes that can cause discomfort that we would associate being a quote unquote gallbladder attack.

What are gallstones?

0:51

The gallbladder acts as a storage tank for bile to assist in digestion of our meals, specifically, kind of fried fatty, greasy meals. And if the gallbladder is not squeezing appropriately, there can be a buildup of sludge and particulate that goes on to form pure gall stones and the gall stones can range in composition, but one of the most common things in a gallstone is cholesterol.

What are the symptoms of a gallbladder attack?

1:17

Symptoms of a gallbladder attack would be normally brought on with the stimulus of a meal and the fried greasy fatty meal, then you'd notice you'd have pain in your right upper quadrant or epigastric that can sometimes radiate towards your shoulder. And you can also have some nausea associated with that.

When should someone go to the ER with these symptoms instead of waiting to see their primary care provider?

1:39

Right I think it depends on the severity and duration of the symptoms. If you notice this occasional pain with fat fried or fatty foods, and it goes away relatively quickly. With no associated fever or yellowing of your skin arise. I think it's reasonable to see your primary care doctor and mention it for an evaluation. If you notice the pain is persistent, severe, does not go away quickly and it's associated with fever, jaundice, or any other issues. Then I would prompt an emergency room evaluation for concern for infection of the gallbladder.

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Are those symptoms mistaken for other issues?

2:12

In the emergency room, when I'm consulted for gall bladders, it's not infrequent to have someone come in with symptoms concerning for a possible heart attack. And only after a negative workup of this chest pain for any heart issues. Then we turned our attention and realize the gallbladder was the true culprit.

How can someone avoid having an attack or developing stones?

2:33

Lifestyle modification and kind of the same things to protect your heart you know, healthy activity, healthy diet and exercise, fatty foods and greasy spicy things in moderation. But the same things to try to help you live a heart healthy lifestyle would also have the benefit of helping minimize your risk for gallbladder attack.

Is surgery the only option?

2:58

So there are some medicines that can help with gallstones, but they're not incredibly effective and it ultimately results in most people being referred for surgery, either a laparoscopic or robotic approach to remove the gallbladder with small incisions and get you back to your normal quality of life without the pain.

Anything else to add?

3:16

You know, the gallbladder is something we can kind of take for granted until it goes awry. But if you do have stones or symptomatic pains, or gallbladder attacks, there are things that we can do to help you and for sure if you're noticing severe symptoms or the associated side so we talked about before I urge you to go seek evaluation from your primary care doctor or emergency room whatever is appropriate based on your symptoms, but don't sit at home and suffer alone.