

Constipation...

No one likes talking about it, but approximately 15% of North Americans suffer from constipation. When laxatives prove to be ineffective and fiber aggravates the symptoms of bloating and abdominal pain, constipation is then often related to a motility problem affecting the nerves in the large bowel. **Irritable bowel syndrome** is the least severe and best known of these problems. Other gut-nerve forms of constipation are called **functional constipation** or **slow transit constipation**. Infrequently – for reasons not understood – these gut-nerve, motility problems may progress to complete paralysis of the colon, necessitating surgery. Women make up the vast majority of sufferers whose faltering large bowel motility has, as yet, no known medical cause. Treatment by surgical removal of the colon does not always fix the problem. About 30% of patients who have their colons removed may deteriorate to complete gut failure. Too little research has been done to know why.

Digestive motility diseases of the colon also affect people suffering from:

- ~ Parkinson's disease
- ~ Multiple sclerosis
- ~ Scleroderma
- ~ Diabetes mellitus

Heartburn...

- Ten percent of North Americans suffer daily with heartburn.
- Half of these people have a gut-nerve motility problem that causes a delay in stomach-emptying and results in a backwash of stomach acid.
- Acid-suppressing drugs alone may not ease the suffering of heartburn + nausea, bloating, and an early feeling of fullness when eating.
- Not one drug currently on the market has been developed to treat stomach motility problems such as delayed gastric emptying or **gastroparesis / dyspepsia**.
- Heartburn can be so severe as to result in repeated hospitalizations due to pneumonia.

Nausea and Vomiting...

Imagine your life if you vomited 50 times a week, every week for years and this was coupled with nausea so severe that not even sleep permitted escape. Unable to eat, you would require a feeding tube to bypass your poorly working stomach. This is the picture of severe **gastroparesis**. 80% of those affected are young women and a cause for their gut-nerve problem remains a medical puzzle. Gastroparesis is commonly misdiagnosed as an eating disorder. There are no medical treatments that have been developed for this severe digestive disease.

More mild to moderate cases of gastroparesis, which are also called **dyspepsia**, are very common in the general public. Many sufferers consume numerous over-the-counter medications and experiment with alternative therapies as they search for relief from their symptoms. Symptom severity ranges from pestering, to disabling with endless cycles of: nausea with or without vomiting, bloating, heartburn, abdominal discomfort, and fullness. Eating intensifies symptoms. Not all of the symptoms are shared by everyone, but everyone suffers. A long list of diseases may damage the nerves within the stomach. Some of those who are affected by more severe gastroparesis are: diabetics, people with AIDS, liver diseases (such as hepatitis C), Parkinson's disease, scleroderma, and chronic fatigue syndrome, to name a few.

Bloating and abdominal pain...

- Mid-gut motility problems are often the cause for unexplained abdominal pain.
- Fifteen percent of adolescent girls suffer from weekly abdominal pain – or what doctors call **functional abdominal pain**.
- Cause is frequently blamed on emotions, but in fact, a poorly understood gut-nerve problem exists
- For a small number, weakening gut motility slowly progresses to complete digestive failure. Frequently hospitalized, and investigated for what appears to be a bowel blockage, reveals nothing – hence this motility disease is called – **chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction**.

Chronic:
Nausea,
Vomiting,
Regurgitation,
Early fullness when eating,
Bloating,
Abdominal Pain,
Acid Reflux,
Constipation.

Just annoying symptoms?

Get informed about this group of under diagnosed, poorly understood digestive “motility” diseases.

**Someone you love
may be suffering.**

*May is Digestive
Motility
Awareness Month.*

The Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities Association

GPDA:

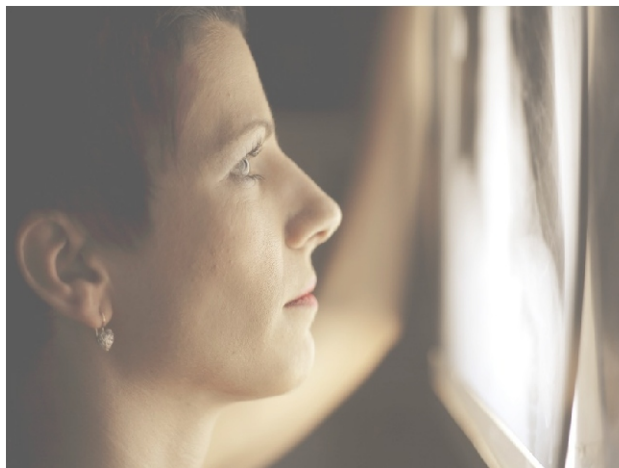
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Digestive motility refers to the digestive system's propulsive (or peristaltic), muscular action, which provides the processing and pumping of our food for digestion and waste elimination. The nervous system inside the gut is responsible for coordinating motility.

Digestive motility diseases – is this some kind of new disease?

No, these are a collection of digestive diseases and disorders resulting from damage or destruction to the fine, mesh-like nerves lying within the gut, and/or from damage to the muscles of the gut itself. Ranging anywhere from spastic to paralyzed motility, individual regions of the gut – the esophagus, the stomach, the mid-gut, or the colon may have their motility hampered. Each region has its own medical label with symptoms reflecting the region where the motility is impaired. Paralyzed gut motility is life-threatening. This most severe form of motility failure is often the result of unknown medical reasons and primarily affects young women.

These digestive diseases are not new. Research is just now uncovering the real problems that lie within the nerves of the gut. Medical textbooks are being rewritten to remove the notion – on the part of both the public and the medical community alike – of these illnesses as being either stress-related or “just all in one's head”.



Understanding those who suffer from digestive motility diseases...

Those who suffer are not responsible for their gut neuromuscular problem. Neither personality traits, nor depression, nor stress, can create chronic, persistent, digestive symptoms. Though not the cause of digestive suffering, emotions can amplify the symptoms. In fact, constant digestive symptoms – without adequate relief – drive many sufferers into a depression.

Digestive motility diseases are very often a hidden disability. Appearing well does not mean feeling well. Digestive symptoms exact a significant toll on mental health and physical functioning. For those who suffer, quality of life diminishes as symptom severity increases, and mental health may erode as the years of suffering accumulate.

The diagnosis of a digestive motility disease may be missed since standard diagnostic tests often will all come back as normal. Few centers have the specialized diagnostic tools to look for a motility problem.

Chances are you know someone who is suffering

- About 1 in 5 North Americans suffer from weekly bouts of one or more of the symptoms listed here.
- Digestive motility diseases make up the largest cause for those who suffer persistently with these symptoms.
- The less severe and better-known motility problem is **irritable bowel syndrome**.
- The more severe forms of these digestive motility diseases are not understood by the public or even by many physicians.
- It can take years before receiving a correct diagnosis.
- **Gastroparesis** (literally meaning “weak stomach” and also known as, delayed gastric emptying) represents the most common of the more severe digestive motility diseases.
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports that 5 million Americans have gastroparesis. This is as common as stomach ulcers, yet no one has heard of gastroparesis. And in Canada, 4 million people are suffering with upper digestive distress related to a gut motility disturbance which includes **acid reflux, dyspepsia and gastroparesis**.



GPDA

May is: International Digestive Motility Awareness Month.

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*Gastroparesis &
Dysmotilities
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