

## 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.

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”.

### Hope is on the horizon:

Companies like Novartis are making a difference with finding new medical treatments which help lower gut motility problems like *slow transit constipation*.

Centers like Cornell are establishing digestive motility centers for the diagnosis and management of motility problems.

### Who we are:

*Gastroparesis & Dysmotilities*  
*Association -*  
[www.digestivedistress.com](http://www.digestivedistress.com)

We are a North American non-profit group focused on education, awareness, advocacy, and support for research.

Canadian charitable # 859541310RR0001  
IRS tax number: 20-1778790

Finding help,  
Finding information.

GPDA:

[www.digestivedistress.com](http://www.digestivedistress.com)



Novartis:

[www.zelnorm.com](http://www.zelnorm.com)

1-888-669-6682

Weill Medical College of Cornell:

[www.cornellphysicians.com](http://www.cornellphysicians.com)

Tel: 1-877-Cornell

National Institutes of Health:

[www.health.nih.gov](http://www.health.nih.gov)



Digestive Motility Diseases,  
Someone you know may be suffering

Answers for distressing digestive symptoms



[www.digestivedistress.com](http://www.digestivedistress.com)

This pamphlet made possible through an Educational grant from Novartis.

## Slow movement of the digestive tract, also known as Digestive Motility Problems

### What is Digestive Motility?

Digestive motility refers to your digestive tract's overall coordinated muscular action that is needed for the mechanical mashing, mixing, and Propulsion (peristalsis) of food for absorption and waste elimination.

### Digestive Motility problems represent a family of disorders.

Many people who suffer for years from troublesome, non-specific, digestive symptoms may actually have a digestive motility problem. This family of digestive disorders is characterized by the slow movement of food along a segment of the digestive tract.

These disorders of poorly coordinated gut function, which can range from spastic to paralytic, can affect any region of the digestive tract and are thought to be caused by faulty nerves lining the gut, or what doctors refer to as the enteric nervous system.

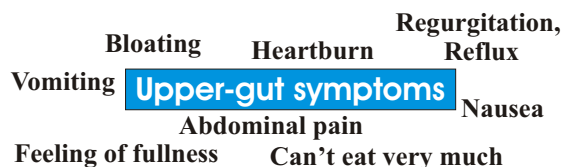
These disorders are impartial to age, sex, ethnic background and economic status.

**For many who suffer from a digestive motility disorder, symptoms may wax and wane throughout the years. A smaller number of sufferers may slowly progress to failing gut function so profound as to result in digestive failure.**

### Diagnosis of the problem

The diagnosis of a digestive motility problem may be missed since standard diagnostic tests often come back as normal. Few health centers have the specialized diagnostic tools to look for a motility problem. Most centers, however, can provide a gastric emptying study to look for slow emptying of the stomach. Ask your doctor for more details.

### Symptom map:



Doctors call this collection of symptoms "dyspepsia". Half of all dyspeptic sufferers experience delayed emptying of the stomach, which indicates a motility problem. Twenty percent of North Americans suffer with recurring dyspeptic symptoms. Reflux of stomach acid may also be a commonly overlooked problem of disordered gastric emptying. When acid suppression does not help relieve your symptoms of bloating and an early feeling of fullness with meals, pro-motility drugs may be needed to help your digestive system to move.

### Mid-gut symptoms

Abdominal pain      Bloating  
Belly distention after eating

Mid-abdominal discomfort or pain is very common and one of the leading reasons for consulting a gastrointestinal, or GI, doctor (one who specializes in diseases of the digestive tract). Most frustrating is the fact that many standard diagnostic tests may come back as normal. Doctors then tend to call this problem "functional abdominal pain". Specialized tests to look for a mid-gut motility disorder are often not available to community GI doctors. A referral to a specialty motility center may be needed to get at the underlying source for your discomfort.

### Lower-gut symptoms

Lower abdominal pain      Bloating  
Constipation      Incomplete evacuation

A pattern of 3 or fewer bowel movements a week lasting 6 months or more is considered to be chronic constipation. When laxatives are not helping and fiber makes your symptoms of abdominal discomfort worse, this usually signals a motility problem. When abdominal discomfort or pain accompanying constipation is the main bothersome symptom and standards tests are normal doctors usually call this "irritable bowel syndrome" (IBS). This, too, is a motility disorder since the primary medical treatment consists of drugs aimed at assisting the workings of the lower Bowel's enteric nerves.

### More severe motility diseases.

The severe end of faltering motility is represented by digestive diseases with unfamiliar names. Some examples are gastroparesis, achalasia, chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, and slow transit constipation

The symptoms experienced by the sufferer reflect the region of the gut that is affected and the diagnostic label given.

Gastroparesis (a motor disorder of the stomach) is the most common of the severe digestive motility diseases and affects 5 million Americans.

Treatments usually consist of special diets or feeding tubes. Some sufferers may never recover.

**In some cases, a slowly progressive failure of gut motility represents a life-threatening and poorly understood digestive disease. Most commonly affecting young women, it is often the result of an unknown medical cause.**

**Known causes for progressively failing motility include AIDS, Parkinson's disease, scleroderma, diabetes, and hepatitis C, to name a few.**

### Help for relief of symptoms

Hampered motility plays a big role in the exceedingly common chronic digestive symptoms found in our community which leave sufferers reaching for numerous over-the-counter preparations and herbal remedies. Frequent doctor visits just for dyspepsia symptoms alone cost \$2 billion annually!

More drug therapies aimed at addressing underlying motility problems are needed. Research is beginning to blossom; the National Institutes of Health has recently committed \$15 million for clinical research into gastroparesis / dyspepsia.

**Ask your doctor about medications that help get your digestive system moving again.**