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# Benefits News



## Digestive Issues and the Doctors Who Treat Them

This document is part of the OEGB June Newsletter, Digestive Health. To access other resources, visit the [News and Events page](#).

Digestive issues can cause a range of symptoms, from constipation or diarrhea to stomach upset and pain. Understanding what symptoms might mean can help you manage the problem and know when to see a health care provider.

The digestive system consists of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract as well as the liver, pancreas, and gallbladder. The GI tract itself is made up of two sections—the upper GI tract and the lower GI tract.



## Symptoms of Upper GI Disorders

The upper GI tract includes the mouth, esophagus, stomach, and first part of the small intestine (duodenum). Common problems with the upper GI tract often include symptoms such as heartburn, problems swallowing, stomach pain, nausea, and vomiting.

The primary digestive disorders that cause upper GI symptoms include:

### Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)



### Peptic Ulcer



### Gastritis



### Gastroparesis



### Gallstones

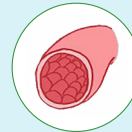


## Symptoms of Lower GI Disorders

The lower GI tract begins after the duodenum. It runs from the small intestine to the large intestine—or colon—to the anus. Common problems with the lower GI tract can include symptoms such as lower abdominal pain, cramping, and bowel movement problems.

The primary digestive disorders that cause lower GI symptoms include:

### Celiac Disease



### Diverticular Disease



### Inflammatory Bowel Disease, including Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis



### Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)



Source: [Verywell Health](https://www.verywellhealth.com/)

## When to Seek Medical Care

Pain, bloating, constipation, and diarrhea affect everyone from time to time. If these are a regular occurrence, you could have an underlying health condition. Talk to your primary health care provider first. However, you may need to see more than one kind of provider to manage your digestive health.

## Digestive Health Providers

A health care team that specializes in different areas can help you manage long-term digestive problems. Having the right team in place will help you stay as physically and emotionally healthy as possible.

This team may include:

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- **Gastroenterologists** specialize in problems that affect your digestive system, including your esophagus, stomach, intestines, pancreas, gallbladder, and liver. They can also treat hemorrhoids, which are often related to digestive health.
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- **Hepatologists** specialize in liver diseases and may work closely with gastroenterologists to manage digestive issues affecting the liver, pancreas, and gallbladder.
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- **Nurse practitioners** often work closely with gastroenterologists to help diagnose, treat, and manage digestive conditions.
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- **Oncologists** specialize in diagnosing and treating cancer with medicines or surgery.
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- **Physician assistants (PAs)** can oversee the treatment and management of digestive problems. They can also prescribe medications and answer questions.
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- **Primary care providers (PCPs)**, like family doctors, internists, and pediatricians, can help you manage your overall health and refer you to other providers, as needed.
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- **Proctologists** are surgeons who specialize in diagnosing and treating disorders of the anus, rectum, and lower gastrointestinal tract. They can treat hemorrhoids, irritable bowel syndrome, and other disorders related to digestive health.
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- **Radiologists** specialize in reviewing imaging tests (X-rays or CT, MRI, PET, and ultrasound scans) that can help diagnose diseases and show damage to any part of the GI tract.
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- **Registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs)** are experts in food and nutrition and can recommend and help you manage an eating plan for digestive problems.
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- **Therapists or mental health professionals** can develop a treatment plan to help you manage the stress and emotional tolls that come from common digestive issues.
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