

NEWSLETTER

The Gallbladder and IBS

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Patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and other digestive problems such as constipation, diarrhea or abdominal pain often wonder if they have a problem with their gallbladder. Problems with the gallbladder can indeed cause these symptoms. However, many people find that having their gallbladder removed did little or nothing to help their IBS, or even made it worse.

What does the gallbladder do?

The gallbladder does exactly what its name describes; it is a small bladder that stores gall. Gall is more commonly known as bile. Bile is produced by the liver and piped over to the gallbladder via the bile duct.

What is bile?

Bile is a highly concentrated yellow green fluid that contains bile acids. Bile acids are important for digesting fats. When you eat, your gallbladder contracts and secretes bile into the small intestine to help you digest your food. If your gallbladder has been removed then it will be more difficult for you to digest fats. In such cases, eating too much fat may cause loose stools.

When does that gallbladder need to be removed?

In some people, stones develop inside of the gallbladder. These stones, when small, can become lodged in the bile duct, which can cause severe pain and be very dangerous if they also clog the pancreatic duct. Larger stones are not able to pass into the bile duct, but their presence can cause severe pain. Sometimes this is worse when the gallbladder is contracting. In either case, removing the gallbladder usually relieves the pain and you feel much better.

When is it questionable to remove the gallbladder?

It is often tempting for physicians to blame the gallbladder for abdominal pain and digestive problems even when there is little or no evidence that the gallbladder is the culprit. It's a relatively simple procedure, and most people don't miss it too much. If stones are present, then the decision is easy to make.

However, in some cases it is recommended that the gallbladder be removed even when stones are not apparent on any exams. The recommendation is based primarily on symptoms and a lack of any other visible problem. Gallbladder function tests also may indicate that the gallbladder is not functioning at 100%. However, that does not mean that it is the cause of the problem. If the gallbladder is only functioning at a small percentage of normal, removing it will only guarantee that it will not function at all.

Many patients have been to the IBS Treatment Center after already having their gallbladder removed and report that it made no difference in how they felt. Others have reported that it helped some, but certainly did not solve all of their digestive problems.

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The IBS Treatment Center is the nation's leading facility for the successful resolution of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. June 2008 Issue. Newsletter Published Monthly.

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Obviously it may be difficult for you to determine whether or not you really need your gallbladder removed. However, if there are no stones and no urgency in having it removed, then you may want to rule out many other causes of abdominal pain first.

These are the same causes addressed at the IBS Treatment Center for all patients who suffer from digestive disorders. These causes are typically overlooked by most

physicians. We have seen many patients who've already had their gallbladder removed and have helped them solve their digestive problems. And recently we helped a patient who was told that she should have her gallbladder

removed, but she remained unconvinced and came to us first. Her story is part of this newsletter.

Asking For Your Health Insurance Experience

We may share aggregate information or individual cases stripped of personally identifiable information with others or even in this newsletter. Obviously we will not share names, phone numbers, social security numbers, or the like with anyone without your specific written consent. Information that we have received has indicated that some patients are receiving full reimbursement for their testing and visit costs, as provided for in their insurance contract. But some patients are not getting as much as they expect or deserve.

By sending us your EOB forms or letting us know you were denied, we can hopefully help you get better reimbursement and help future patients know what to expect and how to best get reimbursed.

Sometimes we get information about how patients were reimbursed but we want to learn more to help you get better reimbursement. The data so far indicates that many plans are setting their 'allowable cost' to the actual cost for food allergy testing.

The most common mistake we see is for the insurance agency to reimburse for 1 test, rather than the 96 tests that make up the standard food allergy panel. Check your own EOB and you may find that you are entitled to a substantially higher reimbursement (or at least more toward your deductible.) But coverage varies widely and it appears that insisting on coverage often pays off.

If you have submitted a claim to your insurance company we would like to know what happened. If you were denied, please email us and let us know which insurance company and what plan you are on. If you got an 'Explanation of Benefits' form (or two or three) it would be great if you could send us a copy of all the pages. Send us your EOB forms!

You can scan and email your documents to us at info@ibstreatmentcenter.com, fax to 206-749-4100, or you can send them by snail mail to 1229 Madison St. Suite 1220 Seattle WA 98104. Participation in this effort is entirely voluntary. We won't share your personal information with anyone without your specific written consent. We will use what you provide to identify ways we can help maximize reimbursement.

Innate Health Foundation Awards First Patient Grant!

The Innate Health Foundation has awarded the first grant to a deserving patient. The patient will be receiving funds soon and will be sharing her story within the next 6 months. Stay tuned to this newsletter and http://www.innatehealthfoundation.org/3_b.htm for updates. If you would like to support the efforts of the Innate Health Foundation to provide grants, information, and to do research, please go to <http://www.innatehealthfoundation.org/Donate.htm>

Innate Health Foundation Board needs You! - The Innate Health Foundation is seeking a new member with fund raising skills to join the board. If you are looking for a way to help others with IBS and/or food allergies/intolerances this is a great opportunity. The board of the Innate Health Foundation directs the activities of this 501(c)(3) public charity. Funds are needed to support the patient grant (http://www.innatehealthfoundation.org/2_a.htm); research (http://www.innatehealthfoundation.org/2_b.htm) and information programs. If you have skills in this area, we would love to have your help. Email the board at contact@innatehealthfoundation.org if you are interested.

Successfully Avoiding Gallbladder Surgery

Jennifer came to us complaining of abdominal pain, gas, bloating and alternating constipation and diarrhea. She had been having digestive problems most of her adult life, but they had become more severe over the last few months. She had recently been through a colonoscopy, endoscopy, and abdominal ultrasound. All of these tests were normal.

Jennifer had also recently had a gallbladder function test performed by her gastroenterologist. She was told that her gallbladder was functioning at only 50% and it was recommended to her that it be removed. No stones had been found, and she was not confident that going through surgery was prudent or that removing her gallbladder would solve her problem. Therefore she decided to visit the IBS Treatment Center.

Jennifer said that she could not understand why removing her gallbladder would help, since 00% function would be less than 50% function. And she wasn't impressed with the explanation that her doctor gave her.

Jennifer had found that by changing her diet she could improve her symptoms to some extent, but she suspected that there were triggers that she couldn't identify without help. After being properly tested for food allergies she was found to be reacting to egg, vanilla, psyllium, cayenne pepper, banana, grape, and nutmeg. It was also discovered that she had a bacterial overgrowth and a deficiency of good bacteria.

Jennifer began to notice improvement within days after avoiding her food allergens and beginning treatment for her bacterial imbalance. By her 2 month follow-up her digestive symptoms were consistently 95% improved and she no longer had any concerns about digestive problems much less her gallbladder. And her sleep and energy were also vastly improved.

6 months later Jennifer continues to feel great and is very happy that she didn't have her gallbladder removed.

Regular Features

This Month's **Product Review**

Rice Dream Enriched Original Rice Milk

Until recently Rice Dream Enriched Original contained some barley, making them inappropriate for those avoiding gluten. Recently The Hain Celestial Group, Inc., makers of Rice Dream, came to see the light. Now, not only is Rice Dream rice milk dairy-free and organic, but gluten-free as well. Rice Dream is available in shelf-stable containers that can sit in your pantry for up to a year without any significant change in quality (but remember to shake well before pouring). Costco has begun carrying Rice Dream by the case at quite reasonable prices.

This reviewer uses it for all kinds of baking, pancakes, on cereal, and basically anywhere traditional recipes would call for cow's milk. Having served pancakes and lots of other foods to lots of unsuspecting people and gotten rave reviews I am confident that you will be able to produce excellent dishes, baked goods, and etc. Check it out at <http://www.tastethedream.com/products/prouct/1467/202.php> and see the gluten-free info at <http://www.tastethedream.com/health/gluten-free.php>



Announcements

Help Us Help Others

If you have been a patient you have an opportunity to help others to achieve relief from their IBS and other health challenges. There are 3 easy ways to do so:

1. Send us your testimonial. Many patients have shared their stories and you can join them. We post testimonials on our website at www.IBSTreatmentCenter.com/6_b.htm Many thanks to those who have already shared their story!
2. Review Dr. Wangen and the IBS Treatment Center online. There are many sites that allow you to review businesses or specifically review doctors. Here are links to a few places where you can write a review:

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/ibs-treatment-center-seattle-2>

<http://www.ratemds.com/doctor-ratings/153076/WA/Seattle/Wangen>

If you are a nurse:

<http://www.nursesrecommendoctors.com/>

3. Donate to The Innate Health Foundation. The Innate Health Foundation is a SO(CC)(3) Non-Profit Organization that supports the IBS and food allergy/intolerance community through patient grants, research, and information.

<http://www.innatehealthfoundation.org/Donate.htm>

Survey for Parents With Celiac Affected Children In School

A major goal of the American Celiac Disease Alliance (ACDA) is to improve the availability and access to gluten-free meals in schools for students with celiac disease. Recently, the ACDA was approached to work on a collaborative project which will help move us closer to achieving that goal. One of the first steps of the project is to determine the level of interest for gluten-free school lunches.

The ACDA has launched a brief online survey to find out who is providing lunch for student's with celiac disease - parents, school, or a combination.

If you have a child with celiac disease attending school, please complete the survey by going to:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=83OFWWSzHfAtSoh9vRH8Pg_3d_3d

Your input is vitally important to demonstrate that our children want and need gluten-free meals at school. The survey will close on July 2, 2008.

If you have any questions about the survey, or issues regarding the accessibility of gluten-free foods in school, please contact the ACDA at info@americanceeliac.org.



Reminders

Dr. Wangen's Blog:

Don't forget to update your links to Dr. Wangen's Blog. We moved it to blogspot for better functionality. Check it out at <http://www.ibstreatmentcenter.blogspot.com>.

Innate Health Foundation Wiki

Looking for a restaurant? Need an allergen-free cookie for your kids? Have a great allergen-free recipe to share? All this and more at the IHFWiki (<http://www.inathealth-foundation.org/wiki/>)— a program of the Innate Health Foundation.



Events

The Washington Health Caucus: Get Your Voice Heard in The Efforts To Reform Health Insurance in Washington State

The Healthy WA Coalition is hosting caucuses in cities across the state. Seattle's caucus is June 19th from 6:30 to 8:30PM at University Christian Church. Other cities across the state follow. All the details are online at <http://healthy-wacoalition.org/Town Hall.html>

Upcoming GIG/IBS Support Group Meetings

Monday! June 30, 2008
(Replacing July's Meeting)
6:30 pm - 7:45 pm
@ The IBS Treatment Center

Special Day, Special Guest!

The 'July' support group meeting will be held on June 30th (Monday) and will feature the second annual visit by Anna Sobaski, proprietor of Breads from Anna!!! Her last visit was a huge hit and everyone loves her breads. If you have a gluten intolerance and think that there isn't any good bread for you, Anna will have samples and will demo her new wraps using the gluten, corn, dairy, soy, rice, nut and yeast free mix. These breads are great!! (Please RSVP due to limited seating).

Thanks to Kimberly Mathai! The June 3rd Meeting Program: Nutrients in Balance: What you Need to Know if You Have a Restricted Diet, was a great success.