

What is functional abdominal pain?

Functional abdominal pain usually occurs in children 4-18 years old.

Functional abdominal pain...

- ✓ Does not have a clear cause
- ✓ Involves abdominal pain that lasts at least 4 days a month for 2 months
- ✓ Is not solely affected by eating, activity, or bowel movements
- ✓ Can be triggered by stress or anxiety



Signs and Symptoms

Your child may complain of frequent abdominal pain, usually around the umbilicus. They may also complain of headaches, limb pain, and difficulty sleeping. Children with functional abdominal pain usually have no other signs of serious illness.

Functional abdominal pain can significantly impact your child's daily life and is often accompanied or made worse by stress, anxiety or low mood.

Call the doctor if your child is diagnosed with functional abdominal pain and develops:

Worsening belly pain

A fever

Loss of appetite

Pain while peeing



For more information, visit:

www.espghan.org



Functional
Abdominal
Pain

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Contacts and Resources

- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/functional-abdominal-pain.html>
- <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children>
- <https://hypnosis4abdominalpain.com/>

Functional Abdominal Pain



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What can you do to help?

Functional abdominal pain usually resolves over time, so the goal of treatment is to ease symptoms and help children to return to their daily life. A few things you can do to help manage their symptoms at home are:

Activity

Encourage them to continue normal activities like going to school, playing sports, and spending time with family and friends. Activities can distract them from their pain and ease their symptoms, whilst physical exercise can improve bowel function and stress levels.

Sleep

Poor sleep can worsen symptoms. If sleep is an issue for your child, try to help them improve their sleep patterns. Some tips can be found in the resources section.



Diet

A balanced diet and staying hydrated will promote a healthier gut and improve wellbeing. It is important to discuss any diet related changes with a dietician.

Mental Health

If your child suffers from any mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, getting help to overcome these will be important. Consider a counsellor for support and to help manage their condition.

Stress and Anxiety

Functional abdominal pain can trigger, and be triggered by, stress and other mental health symptoms. Talking to your child about their stressors and developing strategies to manage them could be beneficial, as well as reassuring them the pain does not have a serious cause and is temporary.

Key Points to Remember



Although there is no known cause, functional abdominal pain is real and dismissing symptoms may make things worse.

These symptoms can be distressing and cause considerable pain, but they are not dangerous and will not lead to long-term damage to your child.



Children with functional abdominal pain may feel sad and disappointed about missing activities, school, and time with their friends which could lead to negativity about dealing with their pain. Helping children to keep a positive outlook can make a huge difference.