Upper abdominal pain

What is upper abdominal pain?

Upper abdominal pain refers to discomfort or pain felt in the area between your chest and belly button. It is a common issue that can have a variety of causes, ranging from mild and temporary to more serious underlying conditions.

What causes upper abdominal pain?

Upper abdominal pain can be caused by many factors, including digestive, muscular, or organ-related issues. Common causes include:

- **Indigestion (dyspepsia)** discomfort or bloating after eating, often linked to acid reflux or overindulgence
- **Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)** when stomach acid irritates your oesophagus, causing heartburn and pain
- **Gastritis** inflammation of the stomach lining, often caused by Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) infection or the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- **Peptic ulcers** open sores in the lining of the stomach or upper small intestine, commonly caused by H. pylori or NSAIDs
- **Gallstones** hard deposits in the gallbladder that can block bile flow, leading to pain in the upper right abdomen
- **Pancreatitis** inflammation of the pancreas, often linked to gallstones or excessive alcohol use
- **Hiatus hernia** when part of the stomach pushes into the chest, causing reflux and discomfort
- **Liver conditions** such as fatty liver disease or hepatitis
- **Muscle strain** caused by physical activity or injury

Occasionally, upper abdominal pain may signal more serious conditions such as a heart attack or certain types of cancer, so it’s important to seek medical advice if symptoms persist or worsen.

What are the symptoms of upper abdominal pain?

Upper abdominal pain may feel like a dull ache, sharp stabbing pain, or a burning sensation. Depending on the cause, you may also experience:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Bloating or feeling full quickly
- Heartburn or acid reflux
- Loss of appetite
- Burping or passing wind

- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)
- Unexplained weight loss

If you notice severe or persistent symptoms, it's important to seek medical advice to rule out serious conditions.

When to seek urgent help

You should seek urgent medical attention if you experience:

- Sudden, severe pain that does not improve
- Vomiting blood or dark, coffee-ground-like material
- Black, tar-like stools, which may indicate internal bleeding
- Chest pain or discomfort, as this could indicate a heart attack
- Unexplained weight loss or jaundice

How is upper abdominal pain investigated?

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we use advanced diagnostic tools to investigate the cause of your upper abdominal pain. These may include:

- **Upper GI endoscopy** a thin, flexible tube with a camera is passed into your stomach and small intestine to look for inflammation, ulcers, or other abnormalities
- **Ultrasound** to check for gallstones or liver issues
- **CT or MRI scans** detailed imaging to assess organs such as the pancreas, liver, or gallbladder
- **Blood tests** to check for infections, liver function, or other markers of disease
- **Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) testing** to detect the bacteria that can cause ulcers and gastritis

How is upper abdominal pain treated?

Treatment depends on the underlying cause of your pain. Common treatment options include:

- **Lifestyle changes** such as avoiding trigger foods, eating smaller meals, or reducing alcohol intake
- **Medications** to reduce acid production, treat infections, or relieve inflammation (e.g., antacids, proton pump inhibitors, or antibiotics)
- **Surgical procedures** if needed, such as removing gallstones or treating ulcers that do not heal with medication
- **Dietary advice** to support digestive health and reduce symptoms

Your consultant will create a personalised treatment plan based on your diagnosis and individual needs.

Why choose Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic?

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we specialise in diagnosing and treating conditions that cause upper abdominal pain. Our experienced team uses state-of-the-art equipment and a patient-centred approach to deliver accurate diagnoses and effective treatments. Whether you need a simple test or ongoing care, we are committed to helping you feel better and live comfortably.

Contact us

If you're experiencing persistent or severe upper abdominal pain, contact Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic today to book your consultation. Early diagnosis and treatment can make a significant difference in managing your symptoms and improving your quality of life.