

# Care and Problems of the Digestive System

Chapter 18 Lesson 2



# Care of the Digestive System

- Good eating habits are the best way to avoid or minimize digestive system problems.
- Eat a variety of foods
- Avoid fried foods
- Choose foods high in fiber
- Eat slowly
- Drink plenty of water
- Do not eat when you are under stress

# Functional Digestive System Problems

- **Indigestion-** *having discomfort in the upper abdomen.*
- This can be the result of eating too much too quick, eating certain foods, stomach disorders, or stress.
- **Heartburn-** a burning pain in the center of the chest.
- This condition has nothing to do with your heart. It is caused by acid reflux-a backflow of stomach acid into the esophagus.
- Heartburn is most often the result of the sphincter muscles between the esophagus and the stomach failing to close completely.
- Heartburn can also be the result of a **hiatal hernia-** *a condition in which part of the stomach pushes through an opening in the diaphragm.*

# Functional Digestive System Problems

- **Gas-** a certain amount of gas in the digestive tract is normal. Excess gas is usually the result of herbs and spices in certain foods.
- **Nausea-** a feeling of distress, fullness, weakness, and often precedes vomiting.
- Can be caused by motion, pathogens, medicines, drugs, or other substances in the stomach.
- Vomiting is a built in response that provides built in protection if you swallow a foreign substance.
- Vomiting is a result of reverse peristalsis

# Functional Digestive System Problems

- **Diarrhea-** a result of food residue passing so quickly through the large intestine that it cannot absorb water.
- Causes: change in eating style, food poisoning, overeating, emotional turmoil, viral and bacterial infections.
- To avoid dehydration it is important to replace water and electrolytes.
- **Constipation-** feces stay in the large intestine so long they have all water absorbed from them.
- Causes: not enough water, lack of fiber, lack of exercise.
- Only when recommended by a physician should laxatives be used. Prolonged use can lead to dehydration.

# Structural Digestive System Problems

- **Gallstones-** small crystals that form in the gallbladder when an upset occurs in the chemical composition of the bile. Gallstones may block the bile duct leading to the duodenum causing pain. Gallstones can be treated with medicines that dissolve them or shattered by ultrasound shock waves.
- **Appendicitis-** *inflammation of the appendix.* The appendix is a 3-4 inch extension at one end of the large intestine. When bacteria or other foreign matter lodges in the appendix the closed end becomes swollen. If the appendix ruptures the infection spreads to the abdomen- a very serious condition. Surgical removal of the appendix is essential.

# Structural Disorders cont.

- **Gastritis-** an inflammation of the mucus membrane that lines the stomach. Gastritis can be caused by irritation to the stomach lining from foods, aspirin, tobacco smoke, alcohol, or a bacterial infection. Antibiotics, or an acid controller are the common remedies for this ailment.
- **Lactose Intolerance-** lactose is one of the sugars present in milk. For the body to digest lactose, it must be broken down by lactase, an enzyme released in the lining of the small intestine. People with a deficiency in lactase are said to be lactose intolerant-an inability to digest lactose. Fermented milk products such as yogurt should be eaten in place of dairy products causing discomfort.

# Structural Disorders cont.

- **Peptic Ulcer-** *a sore in the lining of the digestive tract.* A peptic ulcer may occur in the esophagus, stomach, or duodenum. The lining of the stomach is constantly at risk from acid produced by the stomach wall. Gastric ulcers develop when something damages the protective lining and allows the stomach acid to eat away it. Ulcers may be treated with antibiotics and medicines.
- **Colitis-** inflammation in the colon. This may be caused by a virus or bacteria. Symptoms include cramping, diarrhea with blood and mucus, and sometimes fever. The cause of ulcerative colitis is unknown. In most cases medical treatment controls this disease.



# Structural Disorders cont.

- **Hemorrhoids-** swollen veins in the lower rectum and anus are the result of increased pressure in the veins of the anus. They are most common in people with constipation, pregnant women, and people who sit a lot. Regular exercise and eating fiber rich foods help reduce your risk of developing hemorrhoids.
- **Tooth Decay-** your teeth are part of the digestive system. Tooth decay weakens a tooth and affects the way a person bites and chews food. Regular brushing and flossing of teeth can help prevent tooth decay.