



PREVENTING AND TREATING KIDS' STOMACHACHES: Separating the Truths from the Tall Tales

As many parents know, the words “my stomach hurts” can mean lots of different things, from sour stomach and acid indigestion to discomfort associated with stress or overeating. Each type of stomach complaint has a host of so-called “remedies” to go with it, but how is a parent to know the difference between the tall tales from the truths?

Laura A. Jana, M.D., pediatrician and author, offers her professional advice on preventing and treating children’s tummy aches.

Children cannot get heartburn.

- **Myth.** Children, just like adults, can experience the effects of acid indigestion. More commonly known as heartburn, acid indigestion can be caused by the contents of the stomach backing up into the esophagus. Heartburn in children can be caused by something as simple as lying down after eating. To help prevent this from happening, parents should make sure that their child is eating at least two to three hours before bedtime. Parents should also be aware that certain foods and beverages can result in acid indigestion more often than others and include fried or fatty foods, foods with high acid content, beverages with caffeine and many others.

My child can get an upset stomach from overeating.

- **Truth.** No matter what a child eats – from chicken nuggets and French fries to apples and cheese – overindulgence of any food is a fast way for him or her to get a painful stomachache. This is especially true with rich foods that are high in sugar and/or fat. They tend to leave the stomach very slowly, resulting in a full, bloated feeling that can often progress to a tummy ache.

My child’s upset stomach is not serious enough to treat with medicine.

- **Myth.** First and foremost, parents should consult with a physician to determine the seriousness of their child’s stomachache. When a child’s stomachache is determined to be caused by acid indigestion from certain foods, stress or emotions, there is a safe, effective, fast acting treatment now available in the form of TUMS® Kids™. It’s also an excellent source of calcium, so not only can it help kids feel better fast, it’s also good for them.

According to the results of a recent survey, half of all children have upset stomach resulting from overindulgence, acid indigestion, sour stomach or the like at least once a month, but approximately two-thirds of parents do not treat these upset stomachs.



Chewing gum after eating may help prevent a stomachache.

- **Truth.** Chewing gum may seem like a nasty habit, but it can help prevent a child's stomachache. When chewed after a meal, gum may actually reduce acid reflux and therefore prevent a child's upset stomach.

Stress can lead to a child's stomachache.

- **Truth.** Children experience stress and anxiety from a variety of sources. The pressures of doing homework, trying out for a team, fitting in with peers and, more significantly, taking that dreaded math test, are just some of the stresses that children may face. Unfortunately, stress can have a negative impact on a child's body, affecting everything from hormone production to the nervous system.

Stress can also produce excess stomach acid in a child's stomach, which can result in an upset tummy. Neutralizing the excess acid with an antacid like TUMS Kids can help quickly ease the discomfort. It's also an excellent source of calcium, so not only does it help kids feel better fast, it can also be nutritionally good for them.

Flat ginger ale helps relieve a stomachache.

- **Truth.** Pure ginger, in the form of candied root, is known for easing stomach pains, which means that other foods and drinks with ginger may also work, including ginger soda, ginger snaps and ginger candy. Not all ginger ale, however, has pure ginger in it so check the label.

If a child eats raw cookie dough and gets a stomachache, it means she has food poisoning.

- **Myth.** Not necessarily. It is true that her stomachache could be a symptom of Salmonella poisoning, because certain uncooked foods, including the eggs in raw cookie dough, may carry the Salmonella bacteria. However, most people experience additional symptoms of Salmonella poisoning that can include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within eight to 72 hours after the contaminated food was eaten, and symptoms usually disappear within four to seven days.

If a child eats raw cookie dough, it's possible that she will develop a stomachache – especially when not associated with other symptoms – simply because of the high sugar intake or because she overindulged.

There are no safe over-the-counter remedies to ease a child's occasional upset stomach.

- **Myth.** It's best to treat children with medicines specifically labeled with children's dosages, and there are several such over-the-counter remedies for easing a child's upset stomach. The fact that new TUMS® Kids™ is designed to both safely and quickly neutralize the acid that may cause a child's upset stomach and serve as an excellent source of calcium means that it helps kids feel better and can also be good for them. Its Cherry Blast flavor and smooth texture also play an important role in making it easier for kids to take.

Constipation can cause mild to severe stomachaches in children.

- **Truth.** A very common cause of ongoing stomachaches that parents often overlook is constipation, which can cause serious discomfort. While it is not necessary for children to move their bowels every day, if stools are hard and infrequent, a child may feel uncomfortable or experience actual stomach pain. Fortunately, parents can usually help prevent and relieve constipation in children by simply making sure the child is eating a well-rounded, high-fiber diet. Too many starchy, low-fiber, constipating foods, such as cheese, milk, bread and pasta are just a few examples of foods that can lead to constipation. If changes to a child's diets do not relieve the stomachaches and/or constipation, parents should always discuss this with a pediatrician.

If a child is lactose intolerant, it means he is allergic to milk.

- **Myth.** Contrary to what many people think, these two conditions are not the same. Lactose intolerance is the inability to digest lactose, the natural sugar found in milk, while a milk allergy is an allergic reaction to the proteins in milk. Both can cause an upset stomach and oftentimes, diarrhea.