



# digest

## A Community Pharmacy training guide



**VOL 3**

### **This Volume contains:**

- \* General Overview
- \* Self Care tips
- \* WWHAM Questions
- \* When to refer to the Pharmacist
- \* Treatment algorithm
- \* Test of Knowledge

Topic Of Focus  
**Stomach Pain**

### **Ideal for training:**

Corper Pharmacists | Intern Pharmacists | Pharmacy Technicians | Counter Assistants | Pharmacy Students

# HOW TO USE THIS TRAINING MANUAL

This book is broken down into chapters based on different disease conditions. Each chapter is further broken down into different sections to help the reader fully understand the disease condition and empower the reader with the necessary skills and information needed to give the best form of pharmaceutical care to the patient. The sections include

### 1 Disease overview

This section looks at the general disease condition, symptoms and common medications used in treating the condition. It helps the reader get a deeper understanding of cause of the disease and how the medication works.

### 2 Self-care tips

This column focuses on additional steps and advice given to the patient to help ensure that recovery is quick. This section usually focuses on non-drug approach to disease management.

### 3 WWHAM Questions

This section provides a good framework for finding out more about a customer's condition.

Everyone in the pharmacy team should be familiar with the WWHAM questions. Proper use of these questions helps the Pharmacy team to obtain the necessary information so that they can offer the right advice and/or a product recommendation.

The WWHAM questions are intended to form the basis of any conversations with customers, whether you are responding to their health complaints and recommending a product or they have asked for a medicine by name.

### The WWHAM Questions are

<b>W</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>W: Who is the medicine for?</b> It may not be for the customer
<b>W</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>W: What are the symptoms?</b> You may need to ask a few more questions so that you can fully understand the symptoms.
<b>H</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>H: How long have you had the symptoms?</b> Many minor ailments clear up within a few days.
<b>A</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>A: What Action has been taken?</b> Have they tried any medicine or treatment without success?
<b>M</b>	<b>Medication</b>	<b>M: Are you taking any other Medication?</b> It is important to ask about prescribed medicines as well as any OTC and herbal remedies as some can interact with each other.

**In addition to the WWHAM questions, it is also important to find out whether the patient has any allergies. (it is important to know if the patient reacts to any medicines, foods or other substances).**

### 4 When to refer to the Pharmacist

This section focuses on things the care giver should look out for and then subsequently refer to the Pharmacist in Charge. The section focuses on triggers that point the care giver to the fact that there may be a more serious underlying condition which requires professional management.

### 5 At a glance

This is a pictorial treatment algorithm for the disease under consideration. It shows a flow chart that the care giver can easily follow in questioning the patient so as to rule out any complications. It also clearly spells out the point at which the case is referred to the Pharmacist in charge.

### 6 Test of Knowledge Exercise

After each topic, the reader is expected to answer 10 questions drawn from the content studied. The answers to the questions are provided at the back of this manual.

# Moxie

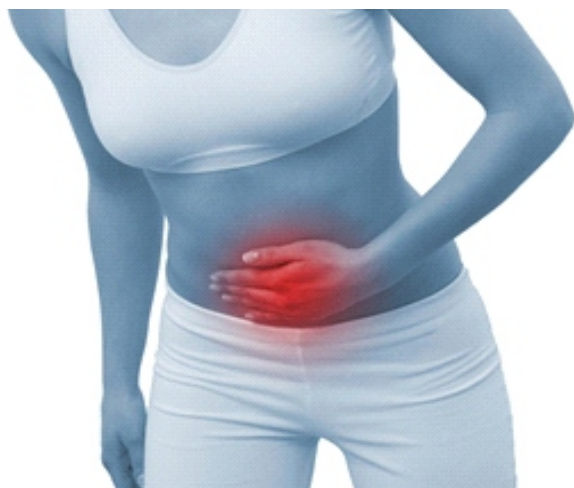
## Paracetamol

### Oral Suspension



# Stomach pain and cramps

**Stomach pain and cramps (sudden severe involuntary muscle contraction) are very common especially in women and children. But because these tend to be rather general symptoms, some sufferers find it difficult to understand their condition. As a result, they may need help and advice selecting appropriate OTC treatments.**



## What are the symptoms?

- Pain in the abdominal area.
- Bloating or gas (indigestion).
- Pressure or a feeling of tightness in the abdomen.
- Nausea.
- Diarrhoea.
- Constipation.

## What causes it?

When we eat, the food and drink we consume is broken down by our body's digestive system – also called the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Its contents are mixed together, all the useful nutrients are absorbed and any unwanted, leftover material is excreted. One of the ways this process works is by a movement called 'peristalsis'. Much of

Just about everyone has had a stomach ache at one time or another. Most of the time, it is not serious and can be readily treated. However, pain can also be a sign of a serious illness. How bad the pain is does not always reflect the seriousness of the condition

causing the pain. Whether it's a mild stomach ache, sharp pain, or stomach cramps, those who are prone to these symptoms seem to suffer on a regular basis – just over a third of sufferers experience abdominal cramps at least once a week.

the body's GI tract is effectively a tube of smooth muscle through which the food passes. Peristalsis is a wave of contractions travelling along the length of this tube.

When this process occurs normally, we are not aware of it. Unfortunately, the human digestive tract(s) can be sensitive and easily disrupted. If the muscle contractions in peristalsis occur abnormally, these normally gentle, wave-like contractions may become strong, painful cramps. This can also trigger related symptoms such as diarrhoea, constipation and gas/bloating.

### Common triggers

Exactly why one person suffers from stomach cramps while the next person doesn't is not clear. However, there are some recognized trigger factors:

- Foods such as fatty, spicy or rich foods; caffeine; alcohol, and acidic citrus fruits.
- Stress/anxiety – a hectic, stress-filled

lifestyle can result in skipping meals, eating on the run, poor sleeping and general worry, all of which may upset digestive health.

- Changes in the daily routine – e.g. travel, jetlag (tiredness and confusion after aeroplane travel), shift working patterns.
- Change in diet.
- Hormonal factors.
- Food allergies/intolerances (e.g. milk).

### Could it be IBS?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic, long-term condition that affects the large intestine, often recognized by irregular bowel habits, and causes many uncomfortable symptoms such as abdominal pain and cramping. The exact cause of IBS is not clear, but it is thought to be an emotionally triggered disorder in which the intestine becomes sensitive to emotional stresses such as worry, fear and anxiety. IBS may flare up for a few days and then improve or resolve completely, sometimes by a bowel movement

(going to the toilet). Some patients may experience periods of diarrhoea and others may have constipation, whilst others may experience painful abdominal cramps with alternating periods of diarrhoea and constipation. Additional symptoms include:

- Changes in bowel habits.
- Abdominal bloating.
- Excessive wind.
- Passing mucus.
- An urgent need to empty the bowels.

### Possible factors that cause IBS include:

- Problems with how food moves along the digestive tract.
- Having a digestive tract that is particularly sensitive.
- Dietary factors or a genetic link.
- Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety or depression.

If IBS is suspected in anyone presenting with abdominal cramps, you should refer them to your pharmacist

### Other possible causes

These are other reasons why

### Self-care tips

- ▲ Eat small, regular meals every four to five hours
- ▲ Don't skip meals
- ▲ Avoid large meals and rich/fatty foods late at night
- ▲ Eat slowly, chewing food properly
- ▲ Drink sufficient fluid
- ▲ Ensure adequate fibre intake and reduce fat in the diet
- ▲ Limit intake of caffeine, fizzy drinks and alcohol
- ▲ Quit smoking
- ▲ Take regular exercise
- ▲ Manage stress

customers may complain of abdominal pain or cramps. Here are some of the most common:

- **Indigestion and heartburn**

Indigestion and heartburn are conditions that affect the upper digestive tract. The main symptom is usually pain or a feeling of discomfort in the chest or stomach area.

You can read more about the signs, symptoms and treatment of these conditions in the 'Heartburn and Indigestion' chapter of this book.

- **Period pain (dysmenorrhoea)**

Menstruation is a monthly occurrence for women in which the body sheds the uterine (womb) lining,

which is later passed through the vagina as blood.

If a woman presents with abdominal pain during her period, she may be suffering from dysmenorrhoea (period pain).

This type of pain is a dull ache felt in the lower parts of the tummy. Pain, cramping and discomfort during menstruation are normal because a woman's hormones can aggravate the symptoms of stomach cramps. Excessive pain is not normal. The pain may spread to the lower back and thighs and normally lasts between 12 and 24 hours. It can be treated with OTC pain relieving products.

### When to refer to the Pharmacist

- ▲ Abdominal discomfort lasting longer than a week
- ▲ Suspected IBS
- ▲ Pregnancy
- ▲ Taking other medication
- ▲ Pain becoming more frequent or severe
- ▲ Pain felt in or between shoulder blades, with nausea
- ▲ Recent injury to the abdominal area
- ▲ Pain with difficulty breathing
- ▲ Fever
- ▲ Rigid abdomen, tender to the touch
- ▲ Vomiting blood/blood in stools
- ▲ Unable to empty bowels, especially if vomiting





Advise patients to eat small but regular meals

### How is it treated?

Because stomach pain and cramps may not be obviously linked to a specific complaint, sufferers may be

confused about how best to relieve their symptoms. Research suggests that many people choose to use painkillers or

indigestion remedies, but these don't address the underlying cause of the symptoms. Suitable OTC treatments that you can recommend include:

- **Antispasmodics**

There are several types of antispasmodics, for example: peppermint oil, drotaverine, homatropine, methylbromide and hyoscine butylbromide. This active ingredient targets the underlying problem of abdominal cramps by relaxing the smooth muscle in the

### WWHAM questions

Ask these questions in order to find out more about the patient's condition so as to give accurate advice and correct medication for their problems.

**W**

**W – Who is it for?**

It may not be the customer who needs the treatment.

**W**

**W – What are the symptoms?**

Ask the customer to describe all the symptoms so that you can establish what the most appropriate treatment would be and whether they need to be referred.

**H**

**H – How long have the symptoms been present?**

The symptoms may flare up and then disappear between episodes. Remember to ask if the customer has had these symptoms in the past.

**A**

**A – Action already taken?**

This will help establish if the customer has used a product that wasn't appropriate or hasn't helped.

**M**

**M – Medications?**

It is important to refer customers who are taking other medication to the pharmacist.



## stomach pain and cramps

walls of the GI tract.

This helps stop the spasms that lead to the painful stomach cramps in period pain, IBS and indigestion.

They come in tablet, syrup and pediatric drops. **Examples:**

**Buscopan Tablets, Colipan Tablets/Syrup, Cinex Tablets, No-spa Tablets, Nospamin Tablets/Syrups/Paediatric drops.**

### • Antiflatulents

People whose pain is caused by trapped wind (gas) or bloating in the GI tract may find symptom relief with an antiflatulent medication such as simeticone or activated dimeticone. These ingredients help to release trapped air in the stomach by combining small air bubbles to make larger ones, which the body can get rid of more easily.

**Example: Remegel Wind Relief, Centwin.**

### • Probiotics

Probiotics, live microorganisms that are usually sold as dietary supplements or are to be found in special yoghurts have



Anti-flatulents help to release trapped gas in the stomach

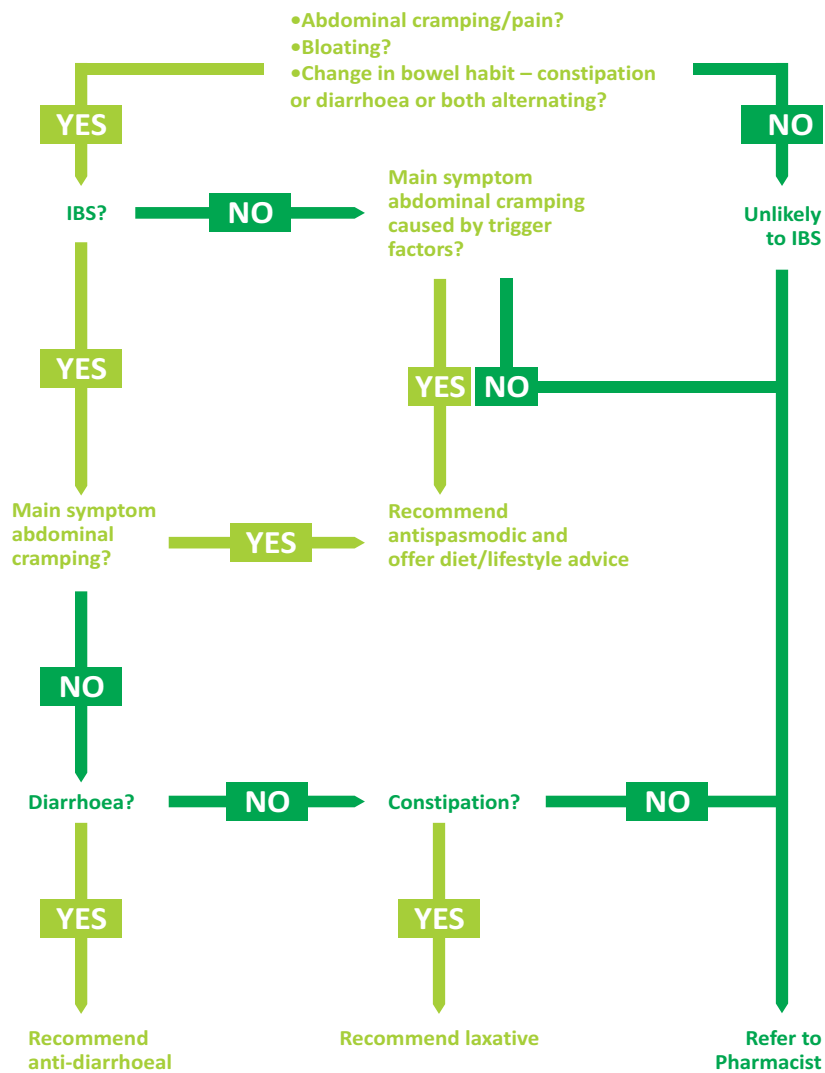
been found to improve symptoms of IBS in some people, when taken in large enough amounts. Examples including Bifidobacterium infantis,

Saccharomyces boulardii, Lactobacillus plantarum and combination probiotics may help regulate bowel function. **Examples: Floranorm, Bioflor.**



Probiotics are found in some special yoghurts

At a glance



## Test of Knowledge Exercises

- 1. Stomach pain and cramps are very common especially in**
  - a. Men and women
  - b. Boys and girl
  - c. Infants and children
  - d. Women and children

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- 2. Which of the following is NOT a symptom of stomach pain and cramps?**
  - a. Sleep
  - b. Pain in the abdominal area
  - c. Constipation
  - d. Diarrhoea

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- 3. A wave of contractions travelling along the length of tube of smooth muscle that makes up the body's GI tract is called**
  - a. Acceleration
  - b. Speed
  - c. Peristalsis
  - d. Motion

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- 4. Examples of antifatulent medications are**
  - a. peppermint oil and drotaverine
  - b. simeticone and activated dimeticone
  - c. homatropine methylbromide and hyoscine butylbromide.
  - d. Buscopan and Nospamin tablets

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- 5. The active ingredient in antispasmodics target the underlying problem of abdominal cramps by**
  - a. Stimulating the smooth muscle in the walls of the GI tract
  - b. Sensitizing the smooth muscle in the walls of the GI tract
  - c. Strengthening the smooth muscle in the walls of the GI tract
  - d. Relaxing the smooth muscle in the walls of the GI tract

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- 6. People whose pain is caused by trapped wind (gas) or bloating in the GI tract may find symptomatic relief with**
  - a. Antifatulent medication
  - b. Antispasmodics
  - c. Anti-inflammatories
  - d. Antidiarrhoeal

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- 7. The following patients suffering from stomach pain or cramps should be referred to the pharmacist EXCEPT**
  - a. Patients with abdominal discomfort lasting longer than a week
  - b. Patients who are bloated (gas in their tummy)
  - c. Patients with stomach pain and difficulty breathing
  - d. Patients vomiting blood or passing blood in stools

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- 8. The following are self-care tips in the management of stomach pain and cramps EXCEPT**
  - a. Avoid large meals and rich/fatty foods late at night
  - b. Eat slowly, chewing food properly
  - c. Ensure adequate fibre intake and reduce fat in the diet
  - d. Drink alcohol and smoke some cigarettes

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- 9. Examples of antispasmodic brands include all of the following EXCEPT**
  - a. Cinex Tablets
  - b. Centwin Tablets.
  - c. Nospamin Tablets
  - d. Colipan Tablets

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- 10. Common triggers of stomach cramps include the following EXCEPT**
  - a. Good sleep
  - b. Change in diet
  - c. Foods such as fatty, spicy or rich foods
  - d. Stress/anxiety

# Moxie

## Paracetamol

### Oral Suspension

