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**T**rouble in the midriff



NLM



**"Speed" Smith** is laid up again with trouble in the midriff. He is trying to figure just how much his stomach has hit him in the pay envelope. A simple arithmetic problem.

Have you, like "Speed," lost time from work because of stomach trouble? If so, you have plenty of company.

More American workers lose time from their jobs because of stomach trouble than for any other illness except colds and influenza. The time lost adds up to 20,000,000 days a year. This means about \$100,000,000 in lost wages.

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## Stomach trouble covers a multitude of ills.

It may be only an uncomfortable feeling after meals. It may be a series of more unpleasant experiences, with pain, nausea, vomiting, and bowel trouble. It may last less than a day, or it may be chronic.

These signs of trouble in the midriff are called by many names. People complain of—upset stomach, indigestion, sick stomach, dyspepsia, gas, heartburn, no appetite, sour stomach, acidity, stomach ache, constipation, or diarrhea. *None of these familiar terms describes the cause of the trouble.*

The cause of stomach trouble may be a natural rebellion of healthy organs against careless eating and drinking. Or it may be the effect of disease in some other part of the body. Or it may be a sickness in which the stomach, itself, is the diseased part.

**The stomach** is one of the first organs to get going 100 percent after birth. Your first hunger cry told the world that you and your stomach had made a lifelong contact. Your stomach makes known its needs; you see that the needs are supplied.

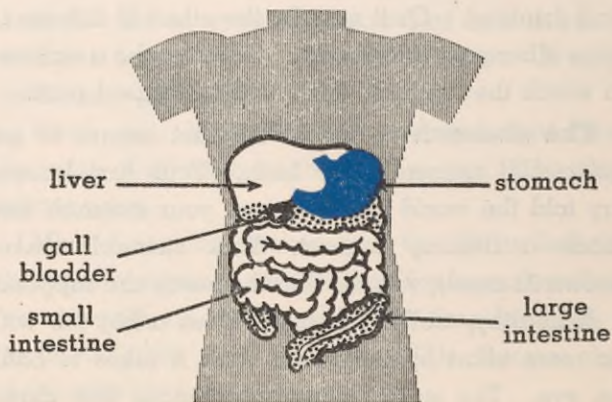
A healthy, well-fed stomach does a big job with no more effort by the owner than it takes to blink an eye. The stomach produces juices that digest

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some foods and gets others ready for digestion. Then the stomach muscles push the food on into the small intestine. There digestion is completed. The food has been changed into simpler substances which the body needs for energy, growth, and repair.

What goes on in the stomach directly affects the small intestine, the large intestine, the liver, gall bladder, and other organs of digestion and elimination. What goes on in those organs affects the stomach.

Planted right in the center of things, so to speak, the stomach is in touch with





all that goes on in your personal community. Some call the stomach the body's barometer because it gives warning signals of storms approaching from distant parts. For example, stomach upsets may be the first rumblings of heart trouble, or diabetes. They may be the first signs of gall bladder trouble, liver disease, or a sick appendix.



Phil Putter had spots before the eyes and indigestion. He carried three kinds of pills, took them faithfully, but refused to see a doctor. One day, his wife called the doctor. The bad attack Phil thought was indigestion turned out to be a sign of heart trouble. The doctor could have told the difference in the beginning. He could have kept Phil's ticker going for years longer than it did.

*The first signs of poisoning* caused by certain materials used in industry may be digestive upsets. When Frank Allbright went to work on a spray-painting job he began to lose time because of

nausea. Frank thought it came from a change in climate. But the doctor at the company hospital found the real answer. When he reported Frank's case, the company located the source of exposure to lead poisoning and cut it off. Frank was saved a serious illness.



**Food poisoning** brings on violent, often fatal, stomach attacks. It is caused by germs in spoiled food. These germs grow very rapidly in meat dishes, salads, eggs, and custard or cream-filled pastries, unless the food is stored in clean containers, cooled quickly, and *kept cold* until time for serving. Make sure that the food you eat at home and especially at picnics, club suppers, and other social gatherings is properly prepared.

**Ulcers and cancer** of the stomach are two serious diseases in which the stomach itself is the sick organ. Both diseases can be cured, if discovered early and treated by a competent doctor.

The warning signs of ulcer and cancer of the

stomach are the same as for many mild stomach troubles. Continued discomfort after meals, indigestion, heartburn, loss of appetite, as well as nausea and vomiting, may be signs of ulcer or cancer. Pain is seldom an *early* sign.

Even a healthy stomach will be frank if it does not get the right *kinds* of food in the right *amounts*.

Take Brad Bounderby's case. Brad lost 2 days a week from work for 6 weeks running. Come Monday morning he was so nauseated he couldn't hold his head up. His trouble was the week-end spree. No self-respecting stomach can take repeated over doses of alcohol.



Or take Mary Martin. She felt dizzy and sick in the stomach every day by 10 o'clock. Often she had to leave work and go home. Her trouble was "reducing"—skipping breakfast, skimping lunch, "dieting" at dinner.



**Strong emotions**, like fear and anger, affect the stomach. You don't have to *know* about the fear or anger. It can be hidden, just as heart disease or tuberculosis may be hidden. But when you go on nursing worries and dislikes, stomach trouble may be your only signal of the trouble.

Susan Sourwine spent more time at home with stomach upsets than anyone else in her section. But doctors found nothing wrong with her organs.

No disease. Susan always complained about work conditions too. She couldn't get along with anyone. At home, Susan had a hard time supporting her mother and two younger brothers. Fellow workers said her trouble was "sheer cussedness." They saw no connection between Susan's family trouble and her stomach trouble. Neither did Susan.

**How do you answer a warning from the midriff?** Many people do nothing; or they do the wrong things. A favorite answer is to reach for a bottle of drug-store medicine.

There are better ways to save the good health





and the money that stomach trouble may cost you.

**Be kind to your stomach.** But do not spoil it with too much attention. While the stomach works quietly and efficiently, enjoy your good health. You will take real warnings more seriously if you let a healthy stomach alone.

**Learn to choose your food and drink wisely.** Many *different* foods and *enough* of them are needed every day to keep you strong and healthy. Healthy people should eat three square meals a day. Eat more fruits and cooked cereals; more green and yellow vegetables; more meat, fish, cheese, eggs, butter, and milk.

Learn not to take *too much* of the foods and drinks that are not needed for health—sweets, bottled drinks, alcohol, coffee, and tea.

**Eat when you are rested** and ready to enjoy your food. Keep the family meal hour for peaceful talk. Settle disputes some other time. If you are "on your own," try to find a quiet, cheerful place and eat regularly.

**Rest and regular meal hours** are especially important for workers on the swinging shift. Often, the change in work hours means the worker gets

less sleep and his meal times are upset. Until he becomes adjusted to the change, his stomach may rebel against the new schedule and cause trouble. Spare no effort to get plenty of rest and regular meals if you are on a swinging shift.

Take your time about eating. You can stoke away a heavy meal in a few minutes, but every time you do, you overwork your stomach.

**Go to your doctor,** if stomach trouble puts you on the sick list time after time. Let him find the *real* cause. Do not waste time dosing yourself and waiting for it to get better.

**Act on your doctor's advice.** Do not expect a competent doctor to look at you and write a prescription in 5 minutes. Sometimes it takes great patience and many special tests to discover the body's secrets. But when your doctor has found the cause of your trouble, you will be on the right track.

Do not expect good results unless you take your doctor's advice. Many people fail to do this, especially if the advice means changing their way of living. They don't like to try new foods, give up sweets or liquor, get more sleep or exercise. Failure to act on the doctor's advice can have serious results.

Oh, yes! "Speed" Smith figured he had lost \$50 in pay alone because of stomach trouble during the last year. That got "Speed." Next day he checked in at his doctor's. After a thorough examination, the doctor told "Speed" that his trouble was not serious.

The doctor sold "Speed" on the idea of eating regularly and eating the right foods. "Speed" threw a lot of worthless pills out the window. He and his stomach get along much better now. He hasn't lost a day from work since then. "Speed" and many other workers have learned to—



**"Get at the cause of stomach trouble and get back on the job"**

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### **Workers' Health Series—No. 5**

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