

Gastroschisis

What is it?

Gastroschisis (pronounced gas-troh-skee-sis) is a birth defect of the belly (abdominal) wall. There is a small hole usually located to the right of the belly button or navel. The intestines or stomach pushes through the hole and is on the outside of the body. Either a small section of the intestines or all of the intestines and the stomach may be outside the body. Gastroschisis occurs early during pregnancy and is usually an isolated birth defect. That means no other birth defects are seen with it. In some babies additional birth defects of the intestines, heart, and prematurity can occur.

Gastroschisis is similar to another birth defect called an **omphalocele**. Babies with an omphalocele usually have a thin layer of tissue covering the exposed organs. Babies with gastroschisis do not have this protective covering, which can lead to infections.



Gastroschisis

Image courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

How common is it?

It is a relatively rare condition. About 1,900 babies are born each year in the United States with it. Recent studies have shown that this birth defect has become more common, though, especially among younger mothers.

What causes it?

The exact cause of gastroschisis is not known. There may be many factors that cause it. Younger mothers and women who consumed alcohol or tobacco during pregnancy are more likely to have a child with it. More research is needed to understand the exact cause.

How is it diagnosed?

It can be diagnosis during pregnancy or after birth. During pregnancy screening tests can check for birth defects and other conditions. After birth a doctor will notice the condition during a routine check.

How is it treated?

Gastroschisis is treated surgically. During surgery, the exposed intestines and stomach are put back into the belly and the opening in the belly wall is closed. Multiple surgeries may be necessary depending on the size of the defect. Your child's doctor will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/gastroschisis.html>

Cincinnati Children's Hospitals

<https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/g/gastroschisis>