

date visited 09/14/12

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## Cholelithiasis

Cholelithiasis is the presence of at least one gallstone in the common bile duct. The stone may be made up of bile pigments or calcium and cholesterol salts.

### Causes

About 15% of people with gallstones will develop stones in the common bile duct, the small tube that carries bile from the gallbladder to the intestine.

Risk factors include a history of gallstones. However, cholelithiasis can occur in people who have had their gallbladder removed.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually do not occur unless the stone blocks the common bile duct. Symptoms that may occur include:

- Abdominal pain in the right upper or middle upper abdomen that may:
  - Be steady
  - Be sharp, cramping, or dull
  - Spread to the back or below the right shoulder blade
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin and whites of eyes)
- Nausea and vomiting

### Exams and Tests

Tests that show the location of stones in the bile duct include the following:

- Abdominal CT scan
- Abdominal ultrasound
- Endoscopic retrograde cholangiography (ERCP)
- Endoscopic ultrasound
- Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP)
- Percutaneous transhepatic cholangiogram (PTCA)

Your doctor may order the following blood tests:

- Bilirubin
- Complete blood count (CBC)
- Liver function tests
- Pancreatic enzymes

### Treatment

date visited 09/14/12

The goal of treatment is to relieve the blockage.

Treatment may involve:

- Surgery to remove the gallbladder and stones
- ERCP and a procedure called a sphincterotomy, which makes a surgical cut into the muscle in the common bile duct to allow stones to pass or be removed

### Outlook (Prognosis)

Blockage and infection caused by stones in the biliary tract can be life threatening. However, with prompt diagnosis and treatment, the outcome is usually very good.

### Possible Complications

- Biliary cirrhosis
- Cholangitis
- Pancreatitis

### When to Contact a Medical Professional

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if:

- You develop abdominal pain, with or without fever, and there is no known cause
- You develop jaundice
- You have other symptoms of cholelithiasis

### Alternative Names

Gallstone in the bile duct; Bile duct stone

### References

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date visited 09/14/12

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