



Gastroparesis

Gastroparesis is the medical term for delayed stomach emptying. During the process of digestion, the stomach must contract to empty itself of food and liquid. Normally, it contracts about three times a minute. This empties the stomach within 90-120 minutes after eating. If contractions are sluggish or less frequent, stomach emptying is delayed. This results in bothersome and sometimes serious symptoms, as well as malnutrition, because food is not being digested properly.

Gastroparesis may be caused by various conditions such as diabetes mellitus, certain disorders of the nervous system, or certain drugs. Sometimes it can occur after an anti-reflux surgery or hiatal hernia repair. Often however, no cause can be found although a viral infection is suspected in some. Usually, the physician prescribes medication to stimulate the stomach to contract. The purpose of the gastroparesis diet is to reduce symptoms and maintain adequate fluids and nutrition. There are three steps to the diet.

Step 1 Diet- consists of liquids, which usually leave the stomach quickly by gravity alone. Liquids prevent dehydration and keep the body supplied with vital salts and minerals.

Step 2 Diet- provides additional calories by adding a small amount of dietary fat — less than 40 gm each day. For patients with gastroparesis, fatty foods and oils should be restricted, because they delay stomach emptying. However, patients at the Step 2 level are usually able to tolerate this amount.

Step 3 Diet- is designed for long-term maintenance. Fat is limited to 50 gm per day, and fibrous foods are restricted, because many plant fibers cannot be digested.