

Distal Intestinal Obstruction Syndrome and Cystic Fibrosis for Adults

What is DIOS?

Distal Intestinal Obstruction Syndrome (DIOS) is a complication of Cystic Fibrosis (CF). It occurs when the bowel becomes partially or completely blocked.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary widely and can include:

- Cramps, abdominal pain and bloating
- Harder stools, fewer bowel motions
- Appetite loss, nausea and/or vomiting
- Weight loss

The gut may even become completely blocked. A hard, immobile mass is often felt on the right side of the stomach.

Causes

People with CF who were born with a meconium ileus, have had gut surgery or have previously had DIOS are more likely to develop DIOS.

DIOS usually occurs with a change of routine, for example:

- Illness or chest exacerbation
- Decreased physical activity
- Change in diet
- Change in environment
- Change of social situation (e.g. starting a new job or moving house)

This is usually connected with reduced fluid intake and/or inadequate enzyme supplements. The contents of the bowel can then become thicker and stickier, causing the bowel to become blocked.

Diagnosis

DIOS is diagnosed with an x-ray. The x-ray shows the gut (intestine) filled with large amounts of impacted (compressed) faeces at the end of the small intestine and/or start of the large intestine. It may also show dilated (enlarged) loops of the small intestine.

Treatment

Mild cases of DIOS are treated with Movicol (constipation treatment). In more severe cases, Gastrograffin and/ or Golytely (an intestinal lavage solution) is used orally, via a nasogastric tube or button. This draws fluid into the gut to dislodge impacted stool. This treatment requires extra oral or IV fluid. If significant abdominal symptoms reoccur, a gastroenterologist should be consulted.

Prevention

As DIOS can often reoccur, it is important to recognise the symptoms early to prevent the onset of DIOS.

The following ideas may help to prevent DIOS:

- Have adequate enzymes for all foods and fluids. Avoid excessive doses.
- Have adequate fluid (e.g. milk, water, salt replacement drink) and salt intake, especially when playing sport, in hotter climates, and during illness.
- Eat lots of fruit, vegetables and high fibre breads and cereals as well as a high calorie, high salt diet.
- Exercise daily.
- Move bowels daily. Avoid delaying when you have the urge to pass a stool.
- Take regular stool softening medication as prescribed by your doctor (e.g. lactulose, pear juice)
- Regular probiotics help to restore good bacteria back into the gut. Examples include yoghurt (e.g. Vaalia or Yakult), or in tablet form (e.g. Inner Health Plus).

Things I can do to try to prevent DIOS:

1.

2.

3.

For further information, contact your Dietitian or Cystic Fibrosis Centre:
