



# Gallbladder

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The human gallbladder stores bile produced by the liver. Bile is released when foods containing fats enter the digestive tract. The bile helps neutralize excess stomach acid and break down fats to absorb fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D, E, and K.

Gallstones affect more than 25 million Americans with 1 million new cases diagnosed annually according to the American Gastroenterological Association. Gallstones can block the normal flow of bile and lodge in any of the ducts that carry bile from the liver to the small intestine. Common indicators of gallbladder inflammation or gallstones include:

- Pain or tenderness under the rib cage on the right side
- Pain between shoulder blades
- Light or chalky colored stools
- Greasy/fatty stools that float

The two types of gallstones are cholesterol stones and pigment stones. Hardened cholesterol forming stones account for about 80 percent of gallstones. Bilirubin, a waste product of red blood cells, forms pigment stones which are smaller. Gallstones can be as small as a grain of sand or as large as a golf ball. The gallbladder can develop just one large stone, hundreds of tiny stones, or a combination of the two.<sup>1</sup> *Diabetes, cholesterol lowering drugs, obesity, poor diet, estrogen dominance, and hormone replacement therapy are just a few of the many causes of the formation of gallstones.*

Gallbladder surgery is now just about as common as a hysterectomy, which is second only to Caesarean sections. Gallbladder surgeries have increased from 22 percent to 57 percent since laparoscopic cholecystectomy (the removal of the gallbladder through an operative laparoscope) was introduced in 1989.<sup>2</sup>

Up to 70-80% of the population can have "Silent Gallstones".<sup>3</sup> This term is used to describe gallstones which people don't even know they have. Since the diet of the general American population is not improving, those numbers are rising. Dr. William Gracie, a private-practice oncologist at Huron Valley Gastroenterology, well known for his research on the gallbladder as well as the development of the Fiber Optic Colonoscopy, reported, "Innocent gallstones are not a myth, and that in some populations the majority of silent gallstones are inconsequential. Routine operation for silent gallstone disease, at least in white American men, *is neither necessary nor advisable.*"<sup>4</sup>

Hundreds of patients who have had their gallbladders removed also report that their surgeon did not advise them to do something to compensate for removing this important organ. William Brugge, MD, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and gastroenterologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston says, "In the first few weeks after your surgery, your doctor probably will recommend that you eat a mostly low-fat diet while your body adjusts to living without a gallbladder. After that, ninety percent of people go back to eating the way they did before."

*References:*

1. *The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse. Gallstones. NIH Publication. July 2007. <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/gallstones>*

2. Brody, Jane. *Personal Health; Gallbladder surgery is easier. Is it too common? New York Times. May 31, 1995*

3. Graefer, Deborah. *Gallbladder Attacks. <http://www.gallbladderaattack.com/gallbladdersymptoms.shtml> Accessed on July 25, 2012.*

4. William A. Gracie, M.D., and David F. Ransohoff, M.D., *The Natural History of Silent Gallstones — The Innocent Gallstone is Not a Myth, N Engl J Med 1982; 307:798-800* September 23, 1982

Federal Law requires that we warn you of the following:

1. Your individual health status and any required health care treatments can only be properly addressed by a professional healthcare provider of your choice.
2. The information provided in this newsletter has not been evaluated by the FDA.

Side effects of having the gallbladder removed can include nausea, gas, diarrhea, bloating and abdominal pains. These may last for weeks up to years! In addition, according to General Surgeon, Dr. Buck Parker, anytime you have an incision in the abdomen, there is a chance to develop a hernia sometime down the road.

The following are ways to prevent gallstones and improve digestion without the use of medications or surgeries. Regardless of whether or not you still have your gall bladder the following tips are important to consider:

1. Don't be afraid of fats! Omega 3 fatty acids are important to maintain good fatty acid ratios for proper nerve and liver function, reduced inflammation and clear arteries. Be sure to include at least 500 mg per day of quality Omega 3's as provided in fish oil supplements. Dietary sources of healthy fats also include olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds, and salmon.
2. Strictly avoid trans fats and deep-fried, breaded foods.
3. Avoid foods that cause congestion of the digestive tract such as dairy products (cheese, cream, "cream of" soup, milk, sour cream), soda, fast food and cured meats (such as sausages, bacon and pepperoni).
4. Be sure to include fiber in the diet through beans and lots of raw vegetables.
5. Include 2-3 quarts of clean filtered water daily. It flushes the liver and dilutes the bile secretions that lead to gallstones.
6. Eat smaller meals more frequently to keep stress of the liver.
7. Do not take calcium supplements by themselves. The negative media reports you hear about "calcium causing heart disease" are experienced by people who only take calcium and no other vitamins or minerals. The food you eat doesn't contain only one mineral or vitamin...right? It's neither natural nor healthy to take only one mineral in supplement form. This would be true with any supplement. In addition, 99% of supplements you take should be taken with food.
8. If you still have your gallbladder and are experiencing indigestion or discomfort in the upper, right quadrant of your abdomen, try placing a heat pad\*\* on the upper, right quadrant of the stomach for 20 minutes after each meal. This is directly under the ribs on the right side. The heat will help with bile flow.
  - a. If you do not have a gall bladder, your liver is still producing bile. You can still have symptoms of "gallbladder congestion" and you can still have "gallstones" even if you do not have a "gallbladder". It's still recommended you also apply heat\*\* over the upper, right quadrant of your abdomen for 20 minutes after each meal, even if you do not have a gallbladder.
  - b. **\*\*DO NOT APPLY HEAT IF YOU'RE PREGNANT.**
9. After removal of the gallbladder, it's crucial to take digestive aides with each meal. Betaine hydrochloric acid is a digestive aide which promotes the production of digestive enzymes. Beets are a good source betaine too!

Absorption of nutrients will be impaired after removal of the gallbladder. Whether you do or do not have a gall bladder, proper testing and retesting to monitor progress can guide you in knowing exactly what you need to do in utilizing the right supplements and lifestyle changes to improve overall health. What are you waiting for? Set up an appointment today to get on your way to optimal health.