

Lower GI Bleeding in Children

What is lower GI Bleeding?

The large intestine (colon) and rectum are frequent sites of bleeding. The most common reasons for passage of bright red blood through the rectum are:

- ◆ Local irritation by cuts (fissures) or hemorrhoids
- ◆ Polyps
- ◆ Infections (for example with bacteria such as *Campylobacter*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella* or *E. coli*)
- ◆ Inflammation (colitis, Crohn's disease)

Bleeding can consist of streaks of blood or larger clots. It can be mixed in with the stools, or show as a coating outside the bowel movement.

How common is lower GI bleeding?

Pediatricians and pediatric gastroenterologists see this problem quite regularly. It is estimated that GI bleeding accounts for 1% of all pediatric hospitalizations.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS :



How is lower GI bleeding treated?

The treatment of lower GI bleeding depends on the cause and the location of the bleeding. Colonoscopy is the best way to determine the cause of GI bleeding and

will be recommended if the bleeding is serious or if the doctor suspects a polyp or colitis. In this test, a flexible tube with a tiny video camera allows the doctor to look directly at the lining of the lower intestine.

If a polyp is seen, these can be removed during the endoscopy with special instruments. Biopsies or tiny pieces of tissue are often taken to help diagnose the cause of bleeding so it can be treated.

Local fissures and hemorrhoids are managed by changing diet, stool softeners and topical creams.

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Lower GI continued

Why does GI bleeding happen?

Straining and passage of a hard or wide stool can injure the anus and cause bleeding. In the case of colitis, the lining of the colon is inflamed and bleeds easily. Polyps are overgrowths of the lining of the intestine, and these can bleed when stool rubs against them.

What can you expect?

Most children with upper GI bleeding recover very well. Those with special liver or blood clotting problems may have more serious and repeated bleeding episodes. Blood transfusions or surgery might be indicated in the more severe cases.

Management in the hospital by pediatric specialists will help provide optimal care.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

LINKS:

National Digestive Disease Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC)

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/bleeding/index.htm>

American College of Gastroenterology

www.acg.gi.org/patients/pdfs/UnderstandGIBleednew.pdf

Medline Plus- U.S. National Library of Medicine/NIH

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/gastrointestinalbleeding.html#cat8

