

## MOST COMMON DIGESTIVE DISORDERS:

- **Dysphagia:** Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia) can result from problems in the mouth, throat, or esophagus. Esophageal causes of dysphagia include esophageal spasm, achalasia, stricture, and cancer. Esophageal spasm occurs when muscles in the esophagus contract for long periods.
- **Achalasia:** In people with achalasia, an absence of esophageal peristalsis prevents food from moving through the esophagus, and the lower esophageal sphincter does not relax enough to allow all the chewed food into the stomach.
- **Esophageal stricture:** An esophageal stricture is a narrowing of the esophagus resulting from long-standing gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).
- **GERD:** GERD occurs when the lower esophageal sphincter relaxes at the wrong times, allowing acid from the stomach to enter the esophagus. One possible cause of GERD is a hiatal hernia, a protrusion of the lower esophageal sphincter and upper portion of the stomach into the chest cavity.
- **Barrett's esophagus:** Chronic GERD can cause permanent changes in cells, a condition called Barrett's esophagus, which increases the risk of esophageal cancer.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome:** IBS affects up to 55-million Americans, mostly women. IBS causes are unknown. IBS symptoms include diarrhea, constipation, and abdominal cramps. There are IBS treatments such as diet and lifestyle changes and medications that can help.
- **Gastritis and gastric ulcers:** Gastritis (inflammation of the stomach lining) and gastric ulcers are most commonly caused by an infection or the use of certain medications.
- **Ulcers:** Ulcers can also occur in the duodenum. Stones that form in the gallbladder can prevent bile from entering the duodenum.
- **Chronic pancreatitis:** Chronic inflammation of the pancreas (chronic pancreatitis), which prevents the formation of pancreatic digestive enzymes, can impair the breakdown and absorption of food.
- **Crohn's disease:** Crohn's disease is an inflammatory disorder that primarily affects the small intestine; it may also damage the large intestine and potentially any other part of the digestive system.
- **Ulcerative colitis:** Ulcerative colitis is a related inflammatory disease that affects only the large intestine. Diarrhea occurs when waste products move through the large intestine too quickly, while constipation results when this movement is too slow.
- **Diverticulitis:** Diverticula (small pouches) can bulge outward through weak spots in the wall of the large intestine—a condition called diverticulosis. Infection or inflammation of diverticula is called diverticulitis.
- **Hemorrhoids:** Lastly, clusters of swollen veins, called hemorrhoids, are thought to result from increased pressure in the veins of the rectum and/or anus.