

Family Education Sheet

Ileocolic Intussusception



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

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What is ileocolic intussusception?

- Ileocolic intussusception is when the small intestine (bowel) folds into the large intestine (see Figure 1).
 - The bowel is the tube from the stomach to the anus that helps break down food.
- This leads to a blockage of the bowel and its blood flow. This can hurt the bowel.

What causes ileocolic intussusception?

The cause is not known in most cases. It seems to happen after a child has a viral sickness. It happens more often in the spring and mid-winter months.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms may be:

- Sudden crampy abdominal (belly) pain, which quickly gets better but then comes back
- Fits of inconsolable crying (parents "know" this cry), and the child returns to normal
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Abdominal distention (swollen or bloated belly)
- Stools (poops) that look like red jelly because of blood

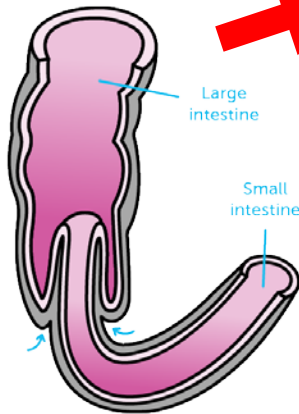


Figure 1

How is it diagnosed?

Intussusception is most often diagnosed with an ultrasound, which takes pictures of your child's bowels. The ultrasound will show pictures of your child's bowel and will tell if the bowel is folded.

How is it treated?

It can usually be treated without surgery. A doctor will place a small tube into your child's rectum and then air is pushed through the tube to unfold the bowel. This is called an air contrast enema. In some cases, surgery may be needed.

Can intussusception come back?

Yes. This is most likely to happen within the first day or 2 after treatment. The symptoms of a second intussusception are the same as the first time. The treatment is also the same.

Call with any questions regarding symptoms.

Contact us:

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–6 p.m.:

Call the General Surgery Nurse Practitioner clinic line:
617-355-7716

After hours, weekends and holidays:

Call the General Surgery line at 617-355-7800 and ask to speak with the General Surgery attending on call.

What happens after my child goes home?

If you go straight home from the Emergency Department, a nurse practitioner will call you within 24 hours to check your child's symptoms. You will get another call 3 days after you leave the hospital. **If you do not get a call, please call General Surgery.**

When should I call the doctor?

Call the surgery clinic to speak with a Nurse Practitioner if your child has:

- Belly pain that is getting worse or happening more often
- A lot of vomiting (throwing up) and/or cannot keep fluids down
- Not peeing as much
- Fever higher than 101.5°F

Go to the emergency room if your child has:

- A swollen belly
- Blood in the stool that is not going away
- Overly tired and hard to wake up

You can always call if you have any other questions or concerns (**see above**). If you have difficulty contacting surgery and are worried about your child, please proceed to the nearest emergency department for evaluation.

Your child's surgeon today is:

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Arabic](#) and [Spanish](#).