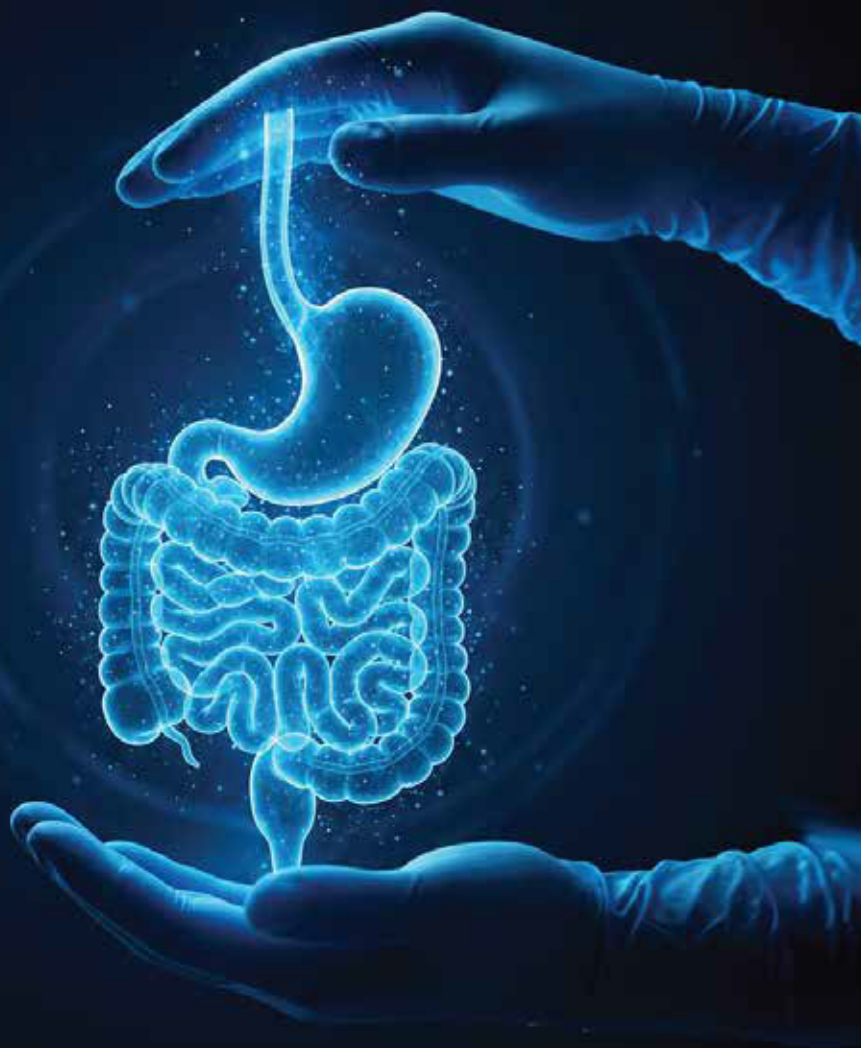


SSMC GI MOTILITY SERVICE

Understanding Digestive Motility Disorders





WHAT IS GI MOTILITY?

Your digestive system is constantly moving food and other contents through the oesophagus, stomach and intestines.

This movement is called gastrointestinal motility.

For digestion to work properly, the muscles and nerves throughout the digestive tract need to work together in a coordinated way. When this movement becomes too slow, too fast, weak or poorly coordinated, it may contribute to digestive symptoms.

GI motility disorders can affect different parts of the digestive system and may cause symptoms such as difficulty swallowing, persistent reflux, nausea after eating, constipation or bowel-control problems.

Importantly, these symptoms can have many possible causes. Experiencing them does not automatically mean that you have a motility disorder.

HOW CAN MOTILITY PROBLEMS AFFECT DIGESTION?

Different parts of the digestive system have different roles.

Oesophagus

The oesophagus moves food from your mouth to your stomach.

Problems with its movement may contribute to:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Food feeling stuck
- Chest discomfort related to swallowing
- Certain reflux symptoms

Stomach

The stomach stores food and gradually moves it into the small intestine.

If stomach emptying is delayed, some patients may experience:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Feeling full very quickly
- Discomfort after meals

Bowel and Pelvic Floor

The bowel and pelvic-floor muscles work together to support normal bowel movements.

Problems with movement or coordination may contribute to:

- Chronic constipation
- Difficulty passing stool
- A feeling of incomplete emptying
- Bowel-control concerns

SYMPTOMS WORTH DISCUSSING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Digestive symptoms are common, but symptoms that persist, repeatedly return or interfere with everyday life should be discussed with a healthcare professional.

These may include:

- Persistent reflux or heartburn
- Difficulty swallowing
- Food feeling stuck when swallowing
- Nausea or vomiting after meals
- Feeling full unusually quickly
- Chronic constipation
- Difficulty emptying your bowels
- Ongoing bloating
- Bowel-control difficulties
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Your doctor will consider your symptoms, medical history and previous investigations before deciding whether specialised assessment is appropriate.



WHY MIGHT SPECIALISED TESTING BE NEEDED?

Some digestive conditions can be identified through tests that examine the structure of the digestive system.

However, in some cases, doctors also need information about how the digestive system is functioning.

GI motility testing can help assess:

- How well the oesophagus contracts during swallowing
- Whether reflux is occurring and when
- How quickly the stomach empties
- How the muscles involved in bowel movements are functioning
- Whether the pelvic floor is coordinating properly

This can provide additional information that helps your healthcare team understand your symptoms and determine the most appropriate next step.

TESTS YOU MAY HEAR ABOUT

Not every patient needs every test. Your doctor will recommend investigations based on your symptoms and clinical needs.

Oesophageal Manometry

Measures the pressure and coordination of the muscles in the oesophagus during swallowing.

It may be considered when assessing symptoms such as difficulty swallowing or certain oesophageal motility disorders.

Anorectal Manometry

Assesses the muscles and coordination involved in bowel movements and bowel control.

It may help evaluate certain types of constipation, defecatory problems or bowel-control difficulties.

Impedance-pH Testing

Helps evaluate reflux by measuring when stomach contents move back into the oesophagus.

Gastric-Emptying Assessment

Evaluates how quickly food leaves the stomach after eating.

It may be considered when symptoms include persistent nausea, vomiting or early fullness.

Flip Panometry (Endoflip)

A procedure that assesses how the oesophagus opens and stretches, helping identify problems that may cause difficulty swallowing.

Other Investigations

Additional testing may be recommended depending on your symptoms and medical history.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING YOUR ASSESSMENT?

Your care usually begins with a detailed conversation about your symptoms.

Your healthcare team may ask about:

- When your symptoms started
- How often they occur
- Whether certain foods or activities affect them
- Any previous treatments or tests
- Your medications
- How your symptoms are affecting daily life

Previous medical records or investigations may also be reviewed.

If specialised testing is needed, your healthcare team will explain:

- Which test is being recommended
- Why it is being recommended
- How to prepare
- What to expect during the test
- When and how your results will be discussed

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

GI motility testing does not provide the same answer for every patient.

Your doctor will interpret your results alongside your symptoms, medical history and any other investigations.

The results may:

- Help identify a specific motility problem
- Help rule out certain conditions
- Provide additional information about how your digestive system is working
- Help guide further investigation
- Help determine an appropriate treatment plan

Your healthcare team will explain what the findings mean for you.



WHAT TREATMENT MAY INVOLVE

Treatment depends on the underlying condition and your individual needs.

Your care plan may include:

Dietary Changes

Changes to meal size, timing or food choices may sometimes form part of treatment.

Medication

Medication may be used to manage specific symptoms or conditions.

Pelvic-Floor Therapy

Some patients with constipation or pelvic-floor dysfunction may benefit from specialised therapy to improve muscle coordination.

Behavioural Support

Certain conditions may benefit from behavioural strategies alongside medical treatment.

Specialised Procedures

Some motility disorders may require specialised endoscopic or surgical treatment when clinically appropriate.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

To help your doctor understand your symptoms, consider keeping a short record of:

- When symptoms happen
- How often they occur
- Whether they are linked to meals
- Foods that appear to trigger symptoms
- Changes in bowel habits
- Previous treatments you have tried
- Any medications or supplements you take

Bringing previous investigation results, if available, may also help your healthcare team understand your medical history.

WHEN TO SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION

Some symptoms should not wait for a routine GI Motility appointment.

Seek urgent medical assessment if you experience:

- Inability to swallow
- Food becoming completely stuck
- Severe chest pain
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Severe or sudden abdominal symptoms

YOUR CARE AT SSMC

SSMC's GI Motility Service provides specialised assessment for conditions affecting the movement and function of the digestive system.

The service supports patients with conditions including:

- Reflux and oesophageal disorders
- Swallowing disorders
- Achalasia
- Gastroparesis
- Chronic constipation
- Defecatory disorders
- Pelvic-floor dysfunction
- Faecal incontinence GI Motility

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Some digestive symptoms can be difficult or embarrassing to discuss.

Constipation, bowel-control concerns and swallowing difficulties are medical issues, and speaking openly with your healthcare team can help them better understand what you are experiencing.

At SSMC, your care is based on your symptoms, diagnosis and individual needs.

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