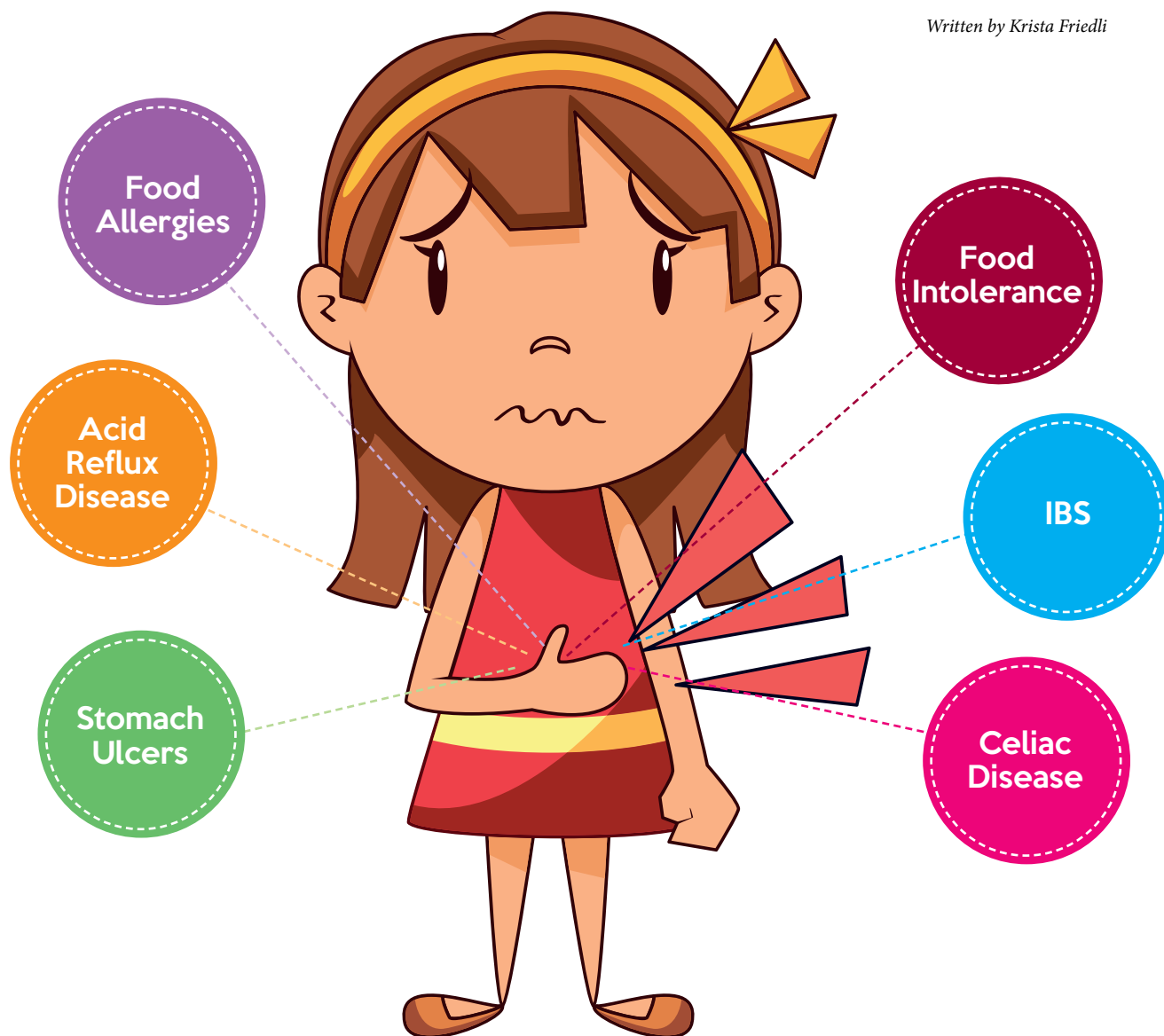


# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TOP TERRIBLE TUMMY TROUBLES

*Katy Magazine's* guide to healthier and happier tummies for everyone in the family

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**C**onstant gas pains, burning, and bloating are not normal. While some of the solutions to a happier tummy may require a change in diet, it is important to take action and not ignore your symptoms before matters worsen. Here are the six most common tummy troubles and the key to a happier, healthier you.

## ACID REFLUX DISEASE

**What It Is** Gastroesophageal reflux (GER) happens when stomach contents travel back into the esophagus causing heartburn and acid reflux. If GER happens more than once or twice a week, it can lead to more serious health problems over time. If you are either overweight, pregnant, or a smoker you are more likely to develop symptoms.

**What It Feels Like** Painful burning in the chest localized behind the breastbone that moves toward the neck and throat. Some even experience the sour taste of acid.

**What To Do** Avoid greasy or spicy foods, alcohol, overeating, and eating two to three hours prior to bedtime. Take over-the-counter antacids to treat symptoms, but if they happen frequently, talk to your doctor.

## CELIAC DISEASE

**What It Is** Gluten intolerance is associated with the common autoimmune disorder celiac disease, also called gluten-sensitive enteropathy. This disease develops when the immune system responds abnormally to gluten and damages the small intestine. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and other grains.

**What It Feels Like** Symptoms may show in the digestive system with diarrhea and abdominal pain but might also cause irritability or depression, most commonly in children.

**What To Do** The only solution is to completely eliminate gluten from your diet. Celiac disease is genetic. Blood tests can help your doctor diagnose the disease. Your doctor may also need to examine a small piece of tissue from your small intestine. No medication or surgery is available.

## FOOD ALLERGIES

**What It Is** An abnormal response to a food triggered by the body's immune system.

**What It Feels Like** Itching of the mouth, swelling of the lips, gastrointestinal (GI) tract issues such as vomiting, abdominal cramps and pain, and worsening of eczema.

**What To Do** It is best to see an allergist who will use the skin prick test to confirm the diagnosis based off your symptoms. You can only prevent symptoms by not eating the foods. Food allergies are potentially life-threatening, and they tend to get worse over time. Food labelers are required to disclose if the product detects any egg, milk, peanut, tree nuts, soy, wheat, shellfish, or fish.

## FOOD INTOLERANCE

**What It Is** Discomfort after consuming certain foods or drinks due to absence of an enzyme that helps break down food. Different than having a food allergy, food intolerances, or sensitivities are not life-threatening.

**What It Feels Like** Nausea, cramps, bloating, gas, diarrhea, migraines, and sensations of warmth, flushing, or constipation. Common intolerances include gluten, legumes and soy, dairy or lactose, wheat, MSG, or corn.

**What To Do** Get a blood test or do an elimination diet. Once you narrow down the foods that are the root of the issue, it is best to cut them out completely so that your body can heal itself from the damage it has caused to your GI tract. Eating foods that you are intolerant to can cause an autoimmune disorder over time. To help with the healing process, take probiotics daily with meals.

## IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

**What It Is** "Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) by definition, is a group of symptoms that include pain or discomfort in your abdomen and changes in your bowel movement patterns," describes Ashley Ray, nurse practitioner at Fulshear Family Medicine. There are four types of IBS: IBS with constipation, IBS with diarrhea, mixed IBS, and unsubtyped IBS.

**What It Feels Like** Cramping or abdominal discomfort that improves after a change in the frequency of your bowel movements, change in how your bowel movements look, bloating, or white mucus in your stool.

**What To Do** Get rid of the foods that are causing the trouble, drink plenty of fluids, and drink peppermint tea to sooth your stomach. "IBS is a chronic disorder. There are multiple reasons why someone may develop IBS," says Ray. See a doctor to find the root of the issue.

## STOMACH ULCERS

**What It Is** A sore in the lining of your stomach caused when the acids that help break down food damage the walls of the stomach.

**What It Feels Like** Burning stomach pain is the most common symptom. The pain usually happens between meals, or during the night, and briefly stops if you eat or take antacids. It can last for minutes to hours and can come and go for several days or weeks.

**What To Do** Ulcers will get worse if not treated. Treatment may include medicines to reduce stomach acids or antibiotics. Antacids and milk can't heal peptic ulcers. Not smoking and avoiding alcohol can help. If the ulcers don't heal, surgery may be required. **KM**

### Don't Ignore These Serious Tummy Troubles

- Diarrhea 25% or more of the time
- Constipation 25% or more of the time
- Pain below the belly button
- Chronic burning of the esophagus or stomach
- Constant, painful bloating and gas
- Bloody diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting after eating specific foods