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# Healthy Outcomes

Crohn's & Colitis Awareness Week December 1-7

## What's going on in your gut? Three serious reasons for stomach pain

By Geisinger Wellness

It might be more than just what you ate.

A stomach ache can be tricky to pin down. Sometimes they show up for an identifiable reason (like a bad meal), but other times, they may show up for what feels like no reason at all. In many cases, stomach aches can be a strong sign that you need to change your diet and your stress levels.

In some cases, however, there may be more serious causes for your stomach pain.

“There are many different situations that can lead to pain in the digestive system,” said Geisinger gastroenterologist Dr. Joshua Obuch. “Everyone’s digestive tract is unique, and some people may be more sensitive to certain foods than others. These stomach aches are usually temporary and come and go within an hour or so of eating. Anxiety and stress can cause stomach aches, too, but those are also usually temporary. However, if you’re having consistent, painful stomach aches, see a doctor—it may be a sign of a gastrointestinal inflammatory disease.”

When going to the doctor, bring a list of any medications you’re taking, as well as your diet and exercise habits. Include what your symptoms are and what makes the symptoms better or worse.

Here are some of the most serious causes of stomach pain, and what you need to know about them.

### Diverticulitis

For many people, especially those over 40, it’s not uncommon to develop small, bulging pouches in the large intestine. These bulges, known as diverticula, are normally harmless. *(Continued on page 3)*

The HCQU works with intellectual disabilities and behavioral health programs in Central PA to provide health care management services for adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities or Autism. Our goal is that all people living in PA, regardless of ability, receive the finest community services available – assuring that they are as healthy as possible and can fully participate in community life. The HCQU works to enhance access to community physical and mental health care through **FREE** education, public health outreach, advocacy, and empowerment as well as to improve health care outcomes. Serving the following counties: Blair, Centre, Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union, Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata, Lycoming/Clinton, Northumberland, and Schuylkill.

## Farewell to Lesley Murphy

by Geisinger HCQU Staff



It's time to say farewell to our HCQU Administrative Assistant. Good coworkers are people that you can always rely on, laugh with, work together with and ask for assistance. You have been all these things for our HCQU department. Thank you for bringing joy to work every day. We will all miss you. Enjoy your free time and may every day feel like the weekend.

*Stay well and happy quilting!*

## COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER UPDATE

### Ages 18 and Older Can Get a Booster Shot

People age 18 years and older who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are eligible for a booster according to the CDC updated on Nov. 19, 2021.

#### If you received Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna

You **should** get a booster if you are:

- Ages 50 years and older
- Ages 18 years and older and live in a long-term care setting

You **may** get a booster if you are:

- Ages 18 years and older

#### **When to get a booster:**

At least 6 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series.

#### If you received Johnson & Johnson's Janssen

You **should** get a booster if you are:

- 18 years or older

#### **When to get a booster:**

At least 2 months after your shot.

#### **Which booster should you get?**

**Any of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the U.S.**

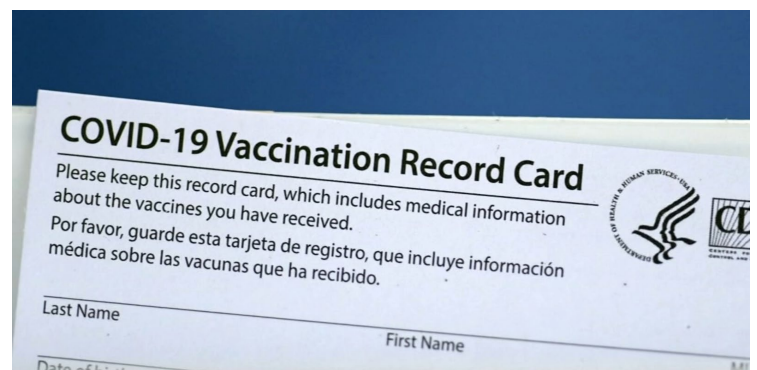
## YOUR VACCINATION CARD AND BOOSTER SHOTS

At your first vaccination appointment, you should have received a [CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card](#)

that tells you

what COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, and where you received it. Bring this vaccination card to your booster shot vaccination appointment.

If you did not receive a CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card, contact the vaccination site where you got your first shot or your [state health department](#) to find out how you can get a card.



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>

## What's going on in your gut...

(Continued from page 1)

are normally harmless. However, if they get infected, they can cause stomach pain and digestive problems.

“When diverticula become inflamed, it becomes known as diverticulitis,” explained Dr. Obuch. “Diverticulitis can cause severe pain, fever, nausea and changes in bowel habits. Typically, diverticulitis is marked by a pain in the lower left side of the abdomen that lasts for more than 24 hours. If you notice this, especially if it’s accompanied by fever, nausea and/or vomiting, get medical attention.”

Minor cases of diverticulitis can be treated usually with antibiotics and adequate hydration. More severe cases require hospital stays to allow time for the bowels to rest.

In rare cases, diverticulitis can lead to more severe complications such as abscesses or blockages, so it’s important to be proactive in treating diverticulitis.

### Crohn’s disease

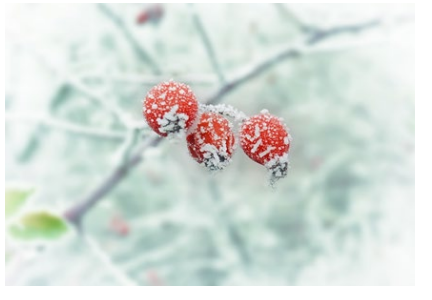
Persistent stomach pain may also be a sign of Crohn’s disease.

“Crohn’s disease is caused by the immune system attacking the digestive system, which causes inflammation,” said Dr. Obuch. “Crohn’s disease can result in serious flare-ups, which may require medical attention. People suffering from Crohn’s disease may have diarrhea, abdominal pain, malnutrition and weight loss, and in severe cases, they may need surgery to remove diseased bowel tissue.”

See your doctor if you are experiencing fever, diarrhea, blood in stools, reduced appetite, mouth sores and/or pain or drainage near the anus. Most people with Crohn’s disease are diagnosed before age 30, and people of Caucasian and Ashkenazi Jewish descent are at particularly high risk.

While it’s uncertain what causes Crohn’s disease, it’s likely influenced by heredity, since one in five people with Crohn’s disease have a family member who also have it.

Although Crohn’s disease cannot be cured, it can usually be



### UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Test your knowledge and see how many words taken from the newsletter you can unscramble:

TIGDISEVE	
BHERLAVIOA	
CLERTIUAVE	
DGBUTE	
NDARTITIO	
CESDFRFENIE	
BLRRITIAE	
SEGRIEVNAC	
MACSTOH	
PRETSISTEN	

Answers to word scramble:

*Digestive, Behavioral, Ulcerative, Budget, Tradition, Differences, Irritable, Grievances, Stomach, Persistent.*



(Continued on page 4)



### Did you know?

Of the one billion population of persons with disabilities, 80% live in developing countries.

An estimated 46% of older people aged 60 years and over are people with disabilities.

One in every five women is likely to experience disability in her life, while one in every ten children is a child with a disability.

Persons with disabilities in the world are among the hardest hit by COVID-19.

(Continued from page 3)

managed by seeing your gastroenterologist who can help with medical management.

### Ulcerative colitis

Ulcerative colitis is a condition with symptoms that are similar to Crohn's disease. Like Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis is an inflammatory bowel disease that causes abdominal pain, cramping and diarrhea. With ulcerative colitis, you may also experience blood in stools, fever, chills, fatigue, and inflammation.

"The key difference between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis is that ulcerative colitis causes ulcers only on the lining of your colon, but Crohn's disease can cause inflammation anywhere from the mouth to the anus," notes Dr. Obuch. "Normally, ulcerative colitis can be managed with changes in diet and medication, but in severe cases, surgery may be required."



If you notice any lasting stomach cramps, frequent trips to the bathroom or blood in your stool, see a doctor immediately.

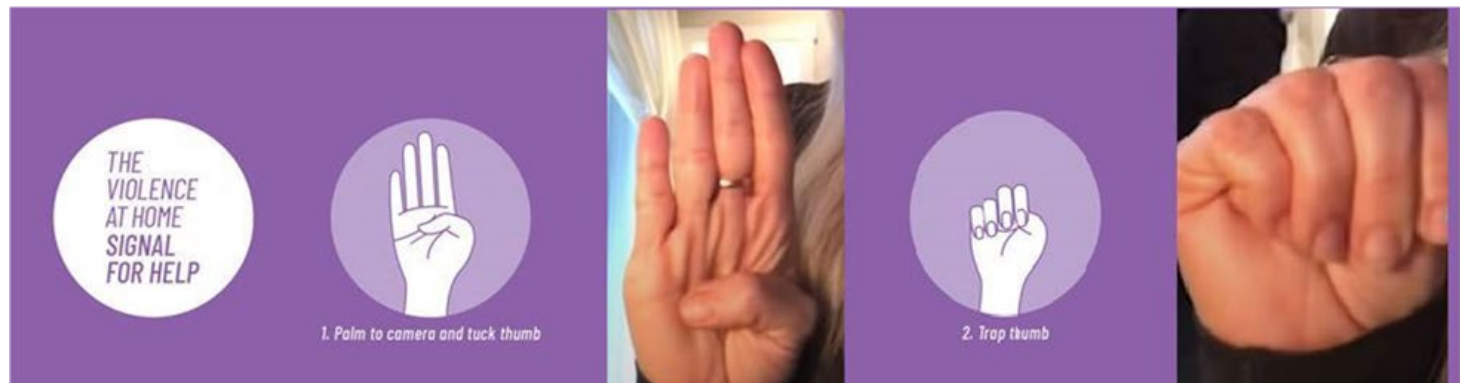
*Gastroenterologist Dr. Joshua Obuch, MD,  
Updated Jan. 19, 2018*

## Spreading Awareness About a Hand Gesture that Signals for Help

This simple one-handed gesture is a sign to silently let others know that they are in distress without making any sounds or noticeable moving. This hand signal can be displayed during a video call or in person such as when a person is answering a door, signaling they want someone to check on them in a safe way.

**SIGNAL FOR HELP INSTRUCTIONS: FACE THE PALM OF YOUR HAND TOWARDS THE OTHER PERSON, TUCK YOUR THUMB INWARDS, AND THEN COVER IT WITH YOUR OTHER FINGERS.**

Read more on this hand signal: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article255637986.html>



## WEIS MARKETS VIRTUAL COOK-ALONG WEBINAR

### DECEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> at 10am with Melissa Logan



Join Weis Dietitian Melissa Logan for a fun and easy holiday recipe. Come ready to get crafty as we'll be making festive **Mini Christmas Tree Pizzas!** *If possible, have all ingredients prepared and measured in advance to save time.*

#### INGREDIENTS:

- Whole wheat pizza crust (regular is fine if you can't find whole wheat)
- Pizza sauce
- Shredded mozzarella
- Cherry or grape tomatoes
- Spinach
- Any other toppings you like on your pizza
- Christmas tree shaped or any holiday shaped cookie cutters

**DIRECTIONS:** First start out with a floured surface and roll out the premade pizza dough to about ½-inch thickness. Next use your cookie cutters to cut Christmas trees out of the dough. Then lay the trees out on to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Top each Christmas Tree pizza with the pizza sauce, tomatoes, cheese, and spinach. (Feel free to add other favorite toppings of choice). Bake for about 10 minutes, or until browned and cheese is melted. Serve hot right away or even room temperature. Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to three days. *You can also make the mini pizzas in the microwave. Just swap raw pizza dough for ready to go crust.*

**Click this link to join:**

<https://zoom.us/j/97492389065?pwd=UjJpbXlTVHJrSTlVTEQxWk81ZjZxUT09>

**Passcode: 1d9d9a5909**

Numeric Passcode just in case anyone will be dialing in from a telephone: 2325243901

Registration is not required. Join on a computer or mobile app. Attend as a group or individually.  
Closed caption is not available.

Hosted by [The Central PA HCQU](#) and a **Weis Dietician Food & Nutrition Expert**

## Take Control of the Holidays-Tips for Coping

The holiday season can bring joy, but it's not uncommon for other unwelcome guests to join in— stress and depression. The holidays present with many demands — holiday parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, house guests and travel to name a few. Stress and depression can affect your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression. Find peace and joy during the holidays with the following helpful tips:

**Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

**Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events.

**Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well.

**Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

**Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

**Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting and other activities. Plan menus and make shopping lists.

**Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. There are obligations you simply can't get out of, it's okay to say no sometimes, especially when an event might take a toll on your mental health or you feel as though you'd rather use your time for something you find more enjoyable. Overscheduling is always a bad idea, but even more so during an already stressful time. Saying no to certain things – whatever your reason for not wanting to attend is – is totally okay!

**Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Try these suggestions: Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks. Get plenty of sleep. Incorporate regular physical activity into each day.

**Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing, and restoring inner calm.

**Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to you doctor or a mental health professional.



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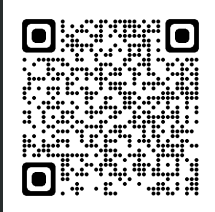
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## The 2022 Physical Health and Behavioral Health Training Index is now available.

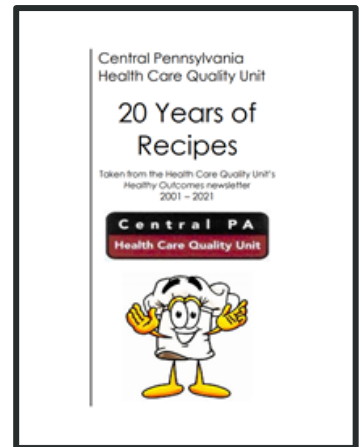
Our HCQU program continues to provide individual and staff trainings and technical assistance with the safety and welfare of our individuals and staff as top priority. Available training topics are listed in the training index. Visit our website to view and download the updated index at <http://www.geisinger.org/hcqu>.

## Cooking Corner

Click the link below for a collection of delicious recipes just in time for the holiday season.

[20 Years of Recipes Cookbook](#)

*(By Lesley Murphy)*



*At the close of another year, we gratefully pause to wish you a warm and happy holiday season.*

*The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health-related situations. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.*