

Script – Print – Get to Know Your Gallbladder

Upper Right Quadrant Pain May Signal Trouble

The gallbladder is one of those organs most of us pay little attention to – unless of course we develop a problem, which can range from gallstones to cancer.

“The gallbladder is an organ that is located underneath your liver in your right upper quadrant. It collects a fluid called bile,” said Amy Henderson, Family Practice Physician Assistant, OSF HealthCare. “The bile is released when it receives signals and helps break down fat in your diet and your digestive track.”

According to the American Cancer Society, there will be nearly 12,000 new cases of gallbladder cancer diagnosed this year. Gallbladder cancer is not usually found until it has progressed and causes symptoms such as abdominal pain or bloating, rapid weight loss or a jaundice appearance. Only 1 of 5 gallbladder cancers is found in the early stages, when the cancer has not yet spread outside the gallbladder.

The most common issue associated with the gallbladder are gallstones, which are hardened deposits of digestive fluid that can vary in size and number and typically don’t cause symptoms unless they change in size.

“When they become problematic is if they’re larger or have difficulty leaving the gallbladder down in the digestive track and they can become stuck and obstruct the bile that dumps into the digestive system causing a backflow,” said Amy Henderson, Family Practice Physician Assistant, OSF HealthCare. “That can be an emergent scenario.”

Among the risk factors for gallbladder-related issues are: obesity, being female, pregnancy, living a sedentary lifestyle and eating a high-fat diet.

“Some great ways to avoid issues with your gallbladder in general is to eat healthy, low fat diet, not drinking a lot of alcohol, make sure you’re staying hydrated, pushing fluids, all those healthy lifestyle modifications can help you in that situation and with your general health,” said Amy Henderson, Family Practice Physician Assistant, OSF HealthCare.

Treatment options for gallbladder issues depend on the severity of your problems. Henderson says options range from lifestyle changes or medication to surgery. That’s why it’s important to let your provider know what’s going on, especially if your problems continue to persist.

“If you’re having a problem, a question, a concern, come see your primary care provider, that’s what we’re here for,” said Amy Henderson, Family Practice Physician Assistant, OSF HealthCare. “Ask those questions and we’ll take it from there.”

For more information on gallbladder problems, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).