

# Gastrointestinal manifestations in COVID-19

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## Introduction

Gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms and signs are observed in Covid. Detailed patterns of their presentation, pathogenesis, and management are poorly defined.

## Objectives

To outline the important GI manifestations of Covid, their diagnosis and management and the potential pathogenetic mechanisms.

## Materials & Methods

We searched the PubMed, Google Scholar, and Clinical Trials databases from 1 January 2020 to 01 April 2023 for articles that describe the GI effects of Covid. The article title and the abstract were read for the initial selection. Reference lists of full-text articles were scanned to find any additional studies. A total of 244 full-text articles were assessed and 87 were included in the analysis.

## Results & Discussion

- 11.4–61.1% GI manifestations were seen in Covid patients and most were mild and self-limiting.
- The most common GI manifestations are anorexia, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain/discomfort.
- Acute pancreatitis, acute appendicitis, intestinal obstruction, bowel ischaemia, haemoperitoneum or abdominal compartment syndrome are reported as the cause in most patients with acute abdomen.
- SARS-CoV-2 RNA has been found in biopsies from all parts of the alimentary canal.

## Conclusions

Involvement of the GI tract in Covid, may be due to direct viral injury and/or an inflammatory immune response. It may lead to malabsorption, an imbalance in intestinal secretions, alteration in gut mucosal integrity and activation of the enteric nervous system. The mainstay of treatment is symptomatic and supportive care. Surgical or endoscopic treatment may be needed for acute abdomen and GI bleeding in a subgroup of patients.

## References

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