Functional Gallbladder Disorder

What is the gallbladder? - The gallbladder is a small, pear-shaped organ that is tucked under your liver. It stores bile, a fluid that helps the body break down fat.

What is functional gallbladder disorder? - It is pain that is typically in the mid upper abdomen or right upper abdomen that may radiate to the back that is typical of biliary-type pain (similar to gallstone pain as described above) but is because the gallbladder is not functioning well. The pain is sometimes associated with nausea and vomiting. This diagnosis is made when the pain is present but gallstones and sludge are absent and lab tests are normal. Pain is typical after a fatty meal.

This disorder has also been called gallbladder dyskinesia, chronic acalculous (without stones) gallbladder dysfunction, chronic acalculous cholecystitis (gallbladder inflammation), cystic duct syndrome, and gallbladder spasm.

Who gets functional gallbladder disorder? - It is unclear what the cause is. Most doctors believe this is a motility disorder or a disorder of gallbladder contractions.

What are the symptoms functional gallbladder disorder? -

- Abdominal pain - often on the right side just under the rib cage or in the middle top portion of the belly especially after a fatty meal. Pain is recurrent and occurs at variable intervals and lasts at least 30 minutes
- Pain in the back or right shoulder
- Nausea and vomiting

Is there a test for functional gallbladder disorder? - This is a diagnosis of exclusion. Other causes of pain are ruled out before making this diagnosis. Patient usually have blood work that is normal, ultrasound to rule out gallstones, and an upper endoscopy, all which are normal. If these test are all negative patients usually undergo a DISIDA scan (or HIDA scan) with CCK (a hormone cholecystokinin).

- DISIDA scan or HIDA scan - This test will help confirm diagnosis. This test will provide a calculation of the ejection fraction, or how much bile the gallbladder releases when stimulated. Usually patients with functional gallbladder disorder have low ejection fractions under 40%.
How is functional gallbladder disorder treated? - People with functional gallbladder disease generally have two treatment options. They can have:

- **Diet modification** - typically patient will try a low fat diet
- **Surgery to remove the gallbladder (cholecystectomy)** - Gallbladder surgery is routine in the United States, it is called a cholecystectomy. But it involves using anesthesia, so it has some risks. The surgery does not affect digestion very much. But about half the people who have surgery have mild symptoms afterward, including watery bowel movements, gas, or bloating. These symptoms usually get better.