

# GALLSTONES

*Pebble-like pieces of material that develop in the gallbladder*

## Basics

- Concretions that form in the biliary tract, usually in the gallbladder
- >80% of gallstones in the U.S. contain cholesterol as their major component
- More common in women and increasing age
- Symptoms and complications result from stones within- or those that escape the gallbladder
- A gallstone may obstruct the pancreatic duct leading to acute pancreatitis

## Symptoms

- Pain in the upper center or right upper quadrant of the abdomen, sometimes radiating to the right shoulder blade
- Pain is constant, intense, dull, begins after a meal, lasts 1-5 hrs, not relieved by antacids, defecation, vomiting, flatus, or positional changes



## Prevention strategies

- Maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle as the major risk factors for gallstones include metabolic disorders – truncal obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and high lipids in the blood.
- Diet rich in vitamin C, omega-3 fats EPA and DHA found in fatty fish, curcumin, the active ingredient in the spice turmeric, and epigallocatechin gallate, a flavonoid found in green tea, all tend to ease inflammation, slow cholesterol crystallization, and improve bile composition. Dandelion, milk thistle, and ginger can be used to stimulate bile flow.
- Other risk factors associated with the formation of cholesterol gallstones include multiple pregnancies due to high progesterone levels which reduce gallbladder contractility; and certain drugs, such as estrogens used for contraception or the treatment of prostate cancer.