

Nausea and Vomiting Nausea and vomiting are caused by GI diseases, medications, toxins, infection, endocrine disorders, labyrinthine conditions, and central nervous system disease. Mechanical obstructions of the upper gut are commonly excluded as causes of chronic nausea and vomiting, but disorders of propulsion including gastroparesis and intestinal pseudoobstruction elicit similar symptoms. Nausea and vomiting also are commonly reported by patients with IBS and functional disorders of the upper gut (including chronic nausea vomiting syndrome, cyclic vomiting syndrome, and cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome).

Altered Bowel Habits Altered bowel habits are common complaints in GI disease. Constipation may be reported as infrequent defecation, straining with defecation, passage of hard stools, or a sense of incomplete fecal evacuation and is caused by obstruction, motor disorders, medications, and endocrine diseases such as hypothyroidism and hyperparathyroidism. Diarrhea may be reported as frequent defecation, passage of loose or watery stools, fecal urgency, or a similar sense of incomplete evacuation. The differential diagnosis of diarrhea includes infections, inflammatory causes, malabsorption, and medications. IBS produces constipation, diarrhea, or an alternating bowel pattern. Fecal mucus is common in IBS, whereas pus and blood characterize IBD. Steatorrhea develops with malabsorption.

GI Bleeding Hemorrhage may develop from any gut organ. Upper GI bleeding presents with melena or hematemesis, whereas lower GI bleeding produces passage of bright red or maroon stools. However, briskly bleeding upper sites can elicit voluminous red rectal bleeding, whereas slowly bleeding ascending colon sites may produce melena. Chronic occult GI bleeding may present with iron deficiency anemia. Causes of upper GI bleeding include ulcer disease, gastroduodenitis, esophagitis, portal hypertensive etiologies, malignancy, tears across the gastroesophageal junction, and vascular lesions. Lower GI sources of hemorrhage include hemorrhoids, anal fissures, diverticula, ischemic colitis, neoplasm,