



Dr Melissa White
MBBS (QLD) FRACP
Gastroenterologist

Provider No: 034161CL

Suite 2/52 Burnett St
Buderim, Qld, 4556

☎ (07) 5456 4278
☎ (07) 5450 1045

www.melissawhitegastro.com.au

Adhesions

Adhesions can be defined as abnormal connections between two surfaces or organs. Adhesions are made of tissue that closely resembles scar tissue and they often occur after patients have had previous surgery or infection in the abdomen.

Inside an abdomen that has never had surgery, or never had any infection, there are no adhesions. People who have had previous infections inside their abdomen are at risk of adhesions when their infection heals. This is because there has been the presence of pus or inflammatory tissue which irritates the surface or organs within the abdomen and a thickening of that tissue becomes sticky. Then, other surfaces and nearby organs or tissues can become adherent to those areas and then a mature adhesion develops. Mature adhesions act like permanent connections between those two surfaces and this is what causes the symptoms.

Contents within the abdomen usually enjoy relatively free movement so that during digestion, organs can contract and move as they wish for their proper function. Adhesions impede this because they act like anchors preventing organs to move freely. This is what causes the pain and dragging sensations that patients with adhesions seem to experience. Of course, many patients have adhesions and are not at all aware of them and they have no symptoms. However, some patients with adhesions have considerable symptoms depending on where those adhesions are located and how the nearby organs are functioning.



Sometimes medications are required to prevent an adhered bowel having spasms. Sometimes surgery is required to divide the adhesions and in severe cases this is often resorted to even though there is a risk of further adhesion formation. Currently there is no medical way to prevent adhesions developing, but research is being done into various washes and gels that can be applied to the abdomen when surgery is being performed in order to try and prevent adhesions developing in the future. Such materials will become available in the near future for use in routine surgery. The main risk of adhesions is the development of obstruction in the gut. This can be an emergency and requires surgery swiftly. Some patients with adhesions have to rely on pain killers so that they can function normally.