

Bile Salt Diarrhea

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Bile salt induced chronic diarrhea is not a common cause of chronic diarrhea. It is often missed by physicians without specialty training. I recently diagnosed one case of this disorder and the treatment successfully resolved diarrhea. The patient had more than ten times watery diarrhea every day. He was afraid of going out because of the frequent diarrhea. He had very extensive work-up including several normal colonoscopies with biopsies, but no conclusive diagnosis could be made. He was treated for Crohn's Disease and other possible disorders for almost two years without any improvement of his diarrhea. He even developed peripheral neuropathy with hands shaking due to the medication used for Crohn's Disease. This case illustrates the importance of correct diagnosis and complexity of proper workup for chronic diarrhea.

Bile salt diarrhea usually occurs in patient with Crohn's Disease with terminal ileum (TI) involvement, surgical resection of TI or tuberculosis infection of small bowel. It is also possible seen in patient with gallbladder removal but it is controversial. The mechanism for bile salt diarrhea is that large amount of unabsorbed bile salt in large bowel leads to secretion of electrolyte and fluid into colon and suppression of the absorption capacity of large bowel. These patients can have more than ten times watery diarrhea per day. The proper treatment is the use of bile salt binding resin. My patient only has one to two soft stools per day after the treatment. He is actively looking for a job now. If you have chronic diarrhea which is not responding to current treatment, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, North Atlanta Medical and Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help!