

# Recurrent GI Bleeding and Watermelon Stomach

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Watermelon stomach is an endoscopic term to describe multiple linear red strips in the lower portion of the stomach converging on the stomach outlet, which looks like half of watermelon. Its academic name is Gastric Antral Vascular Ectasia (GAVE). Some endoscopists without special training do not recognize this lesion and describe it as linear gastritis in the gastric antrum. I recently diagnosed one case with GAVE. The elderly woman had recurrent GI bleeding with anemia for three years. She had quite extensive work-up but the cause for her GI bleeding has remained unknown. She had two colonoscopies and three upper endoscopies (Esophagogastroduodenoscopy, EGD) by three different endoscopists. A linear gastritis in gastric antrum was described in all EGD reports but no further therapeutic recommendation was made based on the finding.

Watermelon stomach (GAVE) is a relatively rare cause of recurrent GI bleeding contributing to 4% of all GI bleeding. It can present as acute or chronic recurrent GI bleeding. It is more often seen in elderly woman. The cause and mechanism of GAVE is unclear. It is usually seen in patients with liver cirrhosis, autoimmune connective tissue diseases, chronic renal failure, ischemic heart diseases, hypertension, scleroderma, and acute leukemia. Specific therapy is available for this lesion and recurrent GI bleeding is preventable. It is very important to distinguish portal gastropathy from watermelon stomach in patients with liver cirrhosis because the treatment is different. The proper work-up for chronic GI bleeding is difficult and complicated.

If you have any questions about GI bleeding with anemia, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, MD, PhD, North Atlanta Medical and Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help!