

COPING WITH PEPTIC ULCERS

Don't Ignore that Gnawing Pain!

H. Pylori Bacteria is the Leading Cause of Peptic Ulcers

Peptic ulcers occur when gastric acid, bacteria, medications or other substances cause a breakdown in the moist tissue lining the stomach, duodenum and other digestive organs.

The information contained in this guide has been prepared to help patients understand the leading causes of peptic ulcers as well as symptoms and treatment options.

01 | Common Contributors

The moist tissue lining, or mucosa, of the stomach and intestinal tract protects these organs from developing an ulcer. Anything that disturbs that lining can increase a person's risk for peptic ulcers. The most common irritants include:

- **H. Pylori Bacteria:** Scientists believe this bacterium causes chronic inflammation which weakens the mucosa, allowing acid to cause an ulcer.
- **NSAIDs:** Chronic or overuse of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, including aspirin and ibuprofen, inhibits the production of chemicals that protect the stomach's lining, shutting off the protective mechanism that keeps the mucosa healthy.
- **Smoking:** Cigarette smoking may diminish the gastric mucosal defensive factors or provide a favorable environment for H. Pylori bacteria.
- **Excess Stomach Acid:** Hyperacidity in the stomach can be the end result of many factors including genetics, lifestyle and certain foods.

02 | Symptoms

Not every patient presents symptoms. When symptoms do occur, the most frequent complaints are:

- Bloating
- Heartburn

- Nausea/vomiting
- Gnawing pain in the middle or upper stomach

If you are experiencing dark or black stool, vomiting blood (may look like coffee grounds) or have severe pain in the mid to upper abdomen, medical assistance should be sought immediately.

03 | Diagnosis & Treatment

Your medical provider may prescribe acid reducing medication and an upper endoscopy. Once a diagnosis has been determined, one or more of the following treatment options will likely be recommended:

- **Lifestyle Changes:** If your medical provider has determined that NSAIDs or diet are factors, changes may be recommended.
- **Medication:** Proton Pump Inhibitors reduce acid levels and allow the ulcer to heal; antibiotics may be prescribed to eliminate H. Pylori bacteria.
- **Surgery:** If the ulcer has created a hole in the wall of the stomach or if there is bleeding, an upper endoscopy or other surgical procedures may be required to repair the damage.

For more information, please visit:

http://www.gastro.org/info_for_patients/2013/6/6/understanding-peptic-ulcer-disease

Did You Know?

Smokers are twice as likely to develop ulcer disease as non-smokers

References

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/peptic-ulcer/basics/causes/con-20028643>

<http://www.healthline.com/health/stomach-ulcer#Overview1>