

Care Gram

Peptic Ulcer Disease

What Is Peptic Ulcer Disease?

The lining of the stomach is covered by a thick protective mucous layer. This layer prevents stomach acid from injuring the wall of the stomach. A peptic ulcer is a sore in this lining of the stomach or the small intestine (duodenum). The stomach makes a very strong acid which helps digest and break down food before it enters the duodenum. More than 80% of ulcers occur in the duodenum.

What Causes Peptic Ulcers?

- Too much acid in the stomach
- Stomach infection caused by the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*)
- Aspirin and arthritis drugs (NSAIDs)
- Too little of the substances that protect the digestive tract lining
- Smoking
- Type O blood
- Family history (parents or close relatives)

What Are the Symptoms?

The most common symptoms of peptic ulcers are:

- Burning pain in the upper stomach area several hours after a meal, or in the middle of the night
- Intense hunger or bloating
- Black stools
- Bleeding

How Are Peptic Ulcers Diagnosed?

To diagnose peptic ulcers, your doctor will need to do the following:

- Complete a full medical history.
- Perform an upper intestinal endoscopy, where a thin, lighted flexible tube called an endoscope is used to look directly at the esophagus (your swallowing tube) and the stomach.
- Perform a barium X-ray of the stomach.

How Is Peptic Ulcer Disease Treated?

- Take medicine to cut down or get rid of stomach acid.
- Stop aspirin and arthritis drugs if found to be the cause.
- Treat the bacterial infection *H. pylori* using antibiotics.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol which causes stimulation of stomach acid.
- Take antacids for relief of symptoms (antacids do not help heal ulcers).



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1616-0783
09/19/2019
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- Undergo surgery for uncontrolled bleeding or other severe problems.
- Stop smoking as nicotine delays the healing of an ulcer.
- Eat three well-balanced meals a day.
- Avoid any foods that cause pain or discomfort.
- Reduce stress if it worsens your symptoms.

If you have any of these symptoms, please see your doctor. Peptic ulcers can return and symptoms should be treated quickly.