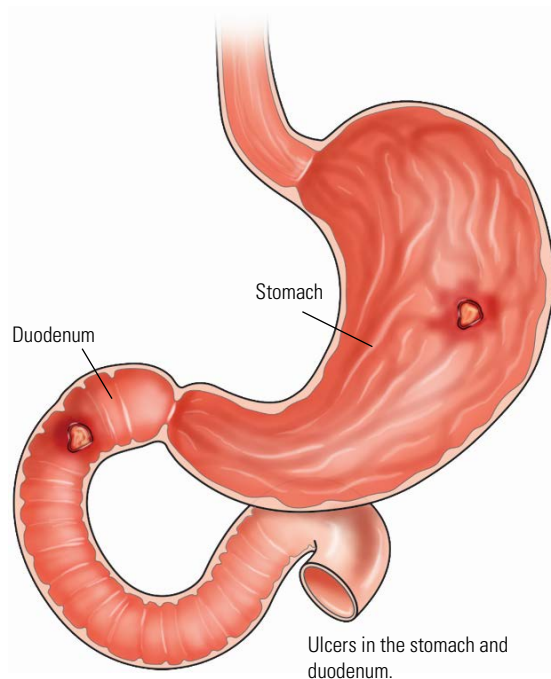


## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# What Is Peptic Ulcer Disease?

- ▶ Peptic ulcer disease is when **painful sores form in the lining of the stomach, duodenum (start of the small intestine) or bowels.**
- ▶ An ulcer can cause belly pain and, in some cases, bleeding or even a hole in the stomach or bowel.
- ▶ The most common causes of ulcers are:
  - An infection of the stomach lining with *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*), a type of bacteria.
  - Overuse of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin or ibuprofen.
- ▶ Ulcers often get better with antibiotics, acid-blocking medicines and not using NSAIDs.
- ▶ Not treating an ulcer can lead to other health issues.
- ▶ About four million Americans have peptic ulcer disease.



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## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Symptoms of Peptic Ulcer Disease

- The most common symptom of an ulcer is a **burning pain in your stomach between your breastbone and your belly button.**
- You may often feel this pain when your stomach is empty (often between meals), but it can happen at any time — even during the night.
- The pain could last from a few minutes to many hours and may sometimes wake you in the middle of the night.
- Stomach pain is often reduced by food, fluids or taking antacids.
- While not as common as stomach pain, other symptoms could be:
  - Upset stomach.
  - Throwing up.
  - Throwing up blood.
  - Blood in the stool (black stool).
  - Loss of appetite.
  - Weight loss.
  - Anemia (low iron in your blood, which can make you feel weak and tired), when an ulcer bleeds without being treated.



## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Causes of Ulcers

- Experts have found that **many ulcers are caused by infection** with the *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) bacteria — not spicy food or stress.
- Another common cause of peptic ulcer disease is the routine use of pain medications called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). People often take NSAIDs to help with aches, pains and swelling. Examples of the drugs that can cause peptic ulcer disease are:

- Aspirin.
- Ibuprofen.
- Naproxen.
- Ketoprofen.
- Meloxicam.
- Celecoxib.



- Learn more about the overuse and misuse of NSAIDs at [gutcheck.gastro.org](http://gutcheck.gastro.org).



## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Risk Factors for Ulcers

▶ **You're at risk for peptic ulcer disease if you:**

- Are 50 years old or older.
- Drink alcohol in large amounts and/or often.
- Smoke cigarettes or use tobacco.
- Have a family member who has ulcer disease.

▶ **You're at risk for NSAID-caused ulcers if you:**

- Are age 60 or older (your stomach lining becomes frailer with age).
- Have had past issues with ulcers and internal bleeding.
- Take steroid medications, such as prednisone.
- Take blood thinners, such as warfarin.
- Drink alcohol or use tobacco on a routine basis.
- Have certain side effects after taking NSAIDs, such as upset stomach and heartburn.
- Take NSAIDs in amounts higher than instructed on the drug facts label or by your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take many different medications that have aspirin and other NSAIDs.
- Take NSAIDs for long periods of time.
- Have had weight-reduction surgery (bariatric surgery).



## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Testing for Peptic Ulcers

There are a few tests your doctor can do if you suspect you may have peptic ulcer disease.

### Tests for *H. pylori* Bacteria

- Your doctor may give you one of many tests to find out if you have *H. pylori*, such as a breath, blood or stool test.
- In this case, your doctor may send your breath, blood or stool sample to a lab be tested for the bacteria.

### Endoscopy

- This is the most accurate test to find active ulcers and treat complications.
- An endoscopy is done to look at the lining of your esophagus (tube that links your mouth and stomach), stomach and duodenum (first part of the small intestine).
- During the endoscopy a biopsy (taking a small piece of tissue to look at under a microscope) may be taken from your stomach, which can be tested for *H. pylori*.
- You will be given medicine to block pain and make you feel relaxed and sleepy during the test.
- During the endoscopy, your gastroenterologist will use a long, thin (about the width of your little finger), flexible tube with a tiny camera on the end to look inside your stomach and duodenum.
- The tube is passed through the mouth into the small bowel as your gastroenterologist does a careful exam. Your doctor will be able to see if there is an ulcer in the stomach or duodenum and treat it if it is bleeding.



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## An Upper-GI (Gastrointestinal) Series

- With this X-ray test, you will be given a contrast liquid to drink called barium.
- Barium coats the inside lining of the esophagus, stomach and small bowel, and makes them easier to see clearly on X-rays.
- The doctor can also see ulcers, scar tissue or areas where something is blocking the normal path of food through the GI tract.
- Barium tests should not be used if there is a suspicion of an infection causing your GI issues, until the needed tests have been done.

### Peptic Ulcer Disease – What to Know:

- ▶ Peptic ulcer disease is when sores form in the lining of the stomach or intestine.
- ▶ Ulcers can cause pain or sometimes bleeding.
- ▶ Ulcers often come from an infection from H. pylori bacteria.
- ▶ Sometimes, ulcers come from the overuse of certain medications, like NSAIDs.
- ▶ Ulcers can often be treated and cured with medication.



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## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Treatment for Ulcers

Your doctor will work with you to find the best way to help heal your ulcers based on what is causing them.

### If your tests show you have *H. pylori* infection:

- You will be prescribed:
  - One or two **bacteria-killing antibiotics** (such as amoxicillin, tetracycline, metronidazole or clarithromycin).
  - A medication that has bismuth.
  - A medicine to lessen the acid in your stomach.
- **Antibiotics and acid-blocking medications can usually cure these ulcers** if they have not caused too much damage.
- Often, antibiotics are given for 1–2 weeks.
- It is important to take all of this medicine to cure the infection.
- You should also stop taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, ketoprofen, meloxicam and celecoxib.
- During and after your treatment, **stay away from alcohol and cigarettes**, as smoking inhibits ulcer healing.
- Once the medicine has treated the ulcer, there is a 90 percent chance that the disease is fully cured.
- With proper care, surgery is usually not needed.
- Still, you may need surgery if an ulcer fails to heal, if you have bleeding problems or if a perforation (hole) or obstruction (block) in the stomach happens.
- Luckily, surgical therapy is rarely needed, because medications usually cure ulcers.



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July 2017

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Since the source of *H. pylori* infection is not yet known, no final recommendations have been made for preventing peptic ulcer disease. However, it is always wise to **wash your hands fully, eat food that has been prepared the right way and drink water from a clean, safe source.**

## If you have ulcers not caused by *H. pylori*:

- Stop using NSAIDs, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, ketoprofen, meloxicam and celecoxib.
- Your doctor will start you on medicine to lessen the acid in your stomach.

### Peptic Ulcer Disease – What to Know:

- ▶ Peptic ulcer disease is when sores form in the lining of the stomach or intestine.
- ▶ Ulcers can cause pain or sometimes bleeding.
- ▶ Ulcers often come from an infection from *H. pylori* bacteria.
- ▶ Sometimes, ulcers come from the overuse of certain medications, like NSAIDs.
- ▶ Ulcers can often be treated and cured with medication.



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## PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

# Things to Be Aware of With Peptic Ulcer Disease



- Not treating an ulcer can lead to a hole in the stomach or intestinal lining — an issue that needs surgery.
- Chronic swelling from an ulcer can cause stomach tissue swelling and scarring.
  - Over time, this scarring may close the outlet of the stomach, stopping food from passing into the small intestine, causing throwing up and weight loss.
  - In severe cases, ulcer complications can lead to death.

If you have had ulcers before or if you get stomach pain, **you may lessen your risk of NSAID-caused ulcers by:**

- Knowing your risk factors.
- Trying a different NSAID.
- Reading medication labels and following instructions.
- Changing your dose and frequency.
- Substituting other pain-relief medications for the NSAID.
- Talking with your doctor about ways to protect your stomach while getting pain relief.
- Staying away from alcohol when taking pain medications.
- Talking to your doctor about pain that does not go away.



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