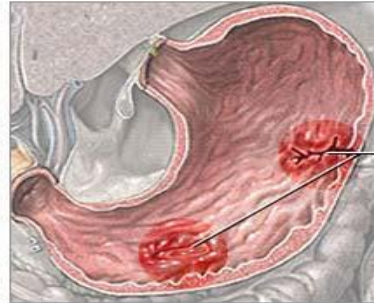


Peptic Ulcer

A peptic ulcer is a sore on the lining of the stomach or duodenum, which is the beginning of the small intestine. Peptic ulcers are common: One in 10 develops an ulcer at some time in his or her life.

Causes

1. The majority of peptic ulcer cases are due to bacterial infection, *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*), which is a type of bacteria that may enter the body through food and water. As the investigations found *H. pylori* in the saliva of some infected people, this facilitate transmission of bacteria from person to person through close contact and exposure to vomit.
2. Long-term use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDs), like aspirin and ibuprofen.
3. Cancerous tumors in the stomach or pancreas can cause ulcers.
4. Heavy caffeine ingestion and smoking are predisposing factors.



Stomach ulcers

* Note: Peptic ulcers are not caused by stress or spicy food, but these can make ulcers worse.

How does *H. pylori* cause a peptic ulcer?

H. pylori weakens the protective mucous coating of the stomach and duodenum, which allows acid to get through to the sensitive lining beneath. Both the acid and the bacteria irritate the lining and cause a sore, or ulcer.

H. pylori is able to survive in stomach acid because it secretes enzymes that neutralize the acid. This mechanism allows *H. pylori* to make its way to the "safe" area—the protective mucous lining. Once there, the bacterium's spiral shape helps it burrow through the lining.

What are the symptoms of an ulcer?

- I. Abdominal discomfort is the most common symptom. This discomfort usually:
 - Is a dull, gnawing ache, comes and goes for several days or weeks, occurs 2 to 3 hours after a meal. (especially in duodenal ulcer).
 - Occurs in the middle of the night (when the stomach is empty).
 - Is relieved by eating and by antacid medications.
- II. Weight loss, poor appetite, bloating, burping, nausea, and vomiting.
Some people experience only very mild symptoms, or none at all.

Treatment

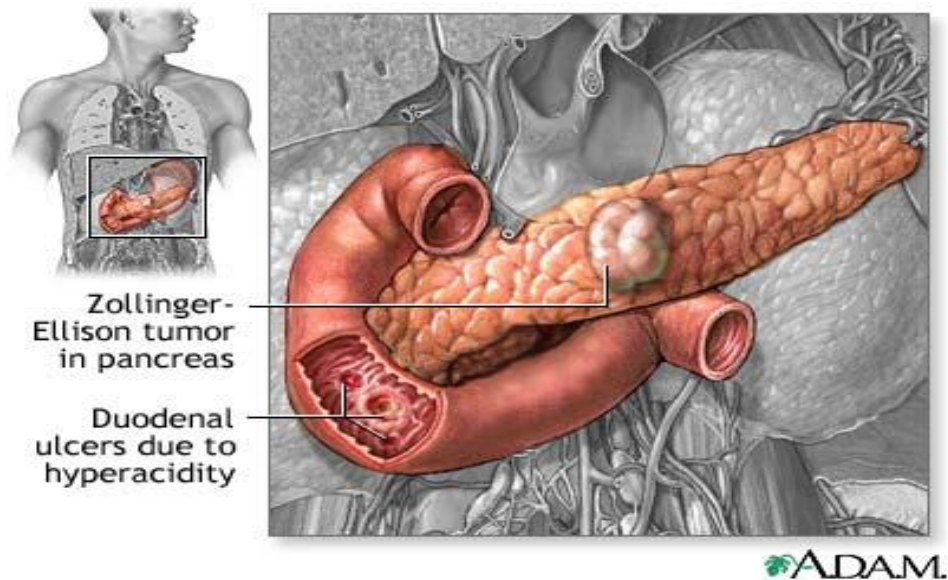
* Any person who complains from these signs should seek medical treatment. It usually involves a combination of antibiotics, acid suppressors, and stomach protectors in order not to aggravate the condition

The use of only one medication to treat *H. pylori* is not recommended. At this time, the most proven *effective treatment* is a **2-week course of treatment called triple therapy**. It involves taking two antibiotics to kill the bacteria and either an acid suppressor or stomach-lining shield. Two-week triple therapy reduces ulcer symptoms, kills the bacteria, and prevents ulcer recurrence in more than 90 percent of the patients.

Prevention

- Wash your hands after using the bathroom and before eating.

- Avoid close contact with any stomach secretion and exposure to vomit.
- Eliminate smoking and caffeine.
- Reduce stress by doing exercise and relaxation techniques.
- Take small and frequent feedings.



References:

1. Seltzer. S. & Bare B, 2000 “Medical Surgical Nursing”, 9th Edition, Lippincott.
2. www.healthforall.com