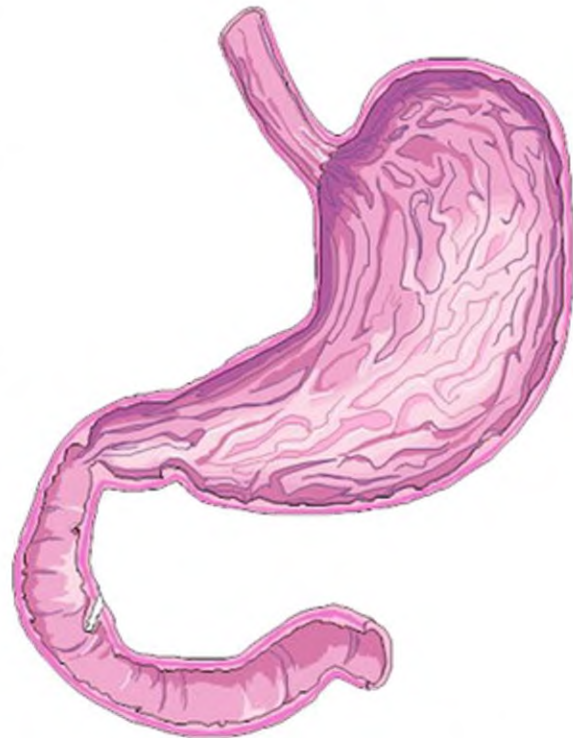


# Gastritis

Gastritis is the result of one of several conditions which cause inflammation of the stomach lining. Possible causes of gastritis include drinking too much alcohol, excessive use of aspirin or ibuprofen or the presence of a bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). Gastritis can even develop as the result of bowel surgery or other diseases. In most situations, effective treatment is available and serious complications are unusual. By working with the physician, a positive outcome usually occurs. To diagnose this condition, a gastroenterologist or endoscopic surgeon will use a tube like device to examine the lining of the stomach and duodenum for changes that may indicate gastritis or peptic ulcer disease. During the procedure, a biopsy sample will be taken from the abnormal areas of the stomach lining. This biopsy sample will be examined microscopically by a surgical pathologist in the laboratory to determine if gastritis is present, and if so what type of abnormality is seen.

## Background Information

*H. pylori* is one of the most common causes of gastritis (inflammation) and affects nearly two-thirds of the world's population. Historically, peptic ulcers (ulcers in the lining of the stomach) were believed to have been caused by stress or by eating the wrong foods. Although these things can aggravate existing ulcers, we now know that the large majority of ulcers are actually caused by *H. pylori*. *H. pylori* is a bacterium that lives in the protective mucus layer of the stomach. The bacterium weakens the mucus layer and allows the stomach acid to reach the underneath stomach lining. This acid can irritate the stomach lining and cause an ulcer. If left untreated, this condition could cause recurrent ulcers and, in some instances, lead to gastric (stomach) cancer.



## Symptoms:

Individuals with gastritis from *H. pylori* often live with this condition without suffering from significant symptoms. However, those with inflammation or ulcers can experience any range of symptoms ranging from mild to severe. The severity of symptoms is dependent on the amount of time the inflammation has been present and on its acuity. During acute phases, an individual may experience abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. During more chronic phases, the abdominal pain will likely be duller and the individual will likely experience a loss of appetite.

## **Follow-up and Treatment Options**

Only a physician can determine the most appropriate treatment. Gastritis can also be caused by reflux of bile into the stomach from the duodenum, and from medications, e.g., aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs used to treat arthritis. Medications that protect the lining of the stomach have been reported to help relieve symptoms for some patients with this form of gastritis. If H. pylori infection is the cause of gastritis it can be effectively treated with medications as well. Antibiotics are used to treat the infection, either alone, or in combination with other drugs designed to reduce the stomach acid. This therapy should help alleviate any symptoms and heal the inflammation.

## **Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider**

- What is the cause of my gastritis?
- What treatment do you suggest?
- What are the benefits of this type of treatment?
- What are the risks and side effects of this treatment option?
- Is there anything I should be doing or not doing during treatment?
- What are the steps after treatment?
- After I am done with my treatment, what are the chances of the gastritis recurring?
- How should I manage my diet to reduce my symptoms?

## **Sources for Additional Information**

- [American Gastroenterological Association](http://www.gastro.org) – www.gastro.org
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) – www.cdc.gov
- [National Institute of Health](http://www.nih.gov) – www.nih.gov

The content of this web page and corresponding downloadable handout is provided to you as general information and not intended as a diagnosis. Please consult with your personal physician regarding the essential details about your condition. Updated 12/2013.