Staying away from a Peptic Ulcer

Do you often feel a burning, stabbing or aching pain somewhere between your breastbone and your belly button especially when your stomach empties? Do not ignore this pain, because this pain can be triggered by peptic ulcers. The most common symptom of a peptic ulcer is burning and abdominal pain.

Peptic ulcers are open sores that develop on the inside lining of your esophagus, stomach and the upper portion of your small intestine. Your pain can differ in severity and duration; it could last anywhere from a couple of minutes to several hours. Eating food as soon as the pain arises or taking an over-the counter antacid medication can be a temporary solution, but ignoring this pain for a longer period can increase the severity and frequency of this pain. In fact if peptic ulcer is left untreated, it can result in internal bleeding, infection or scar tissue.

Peptic ulcers include:

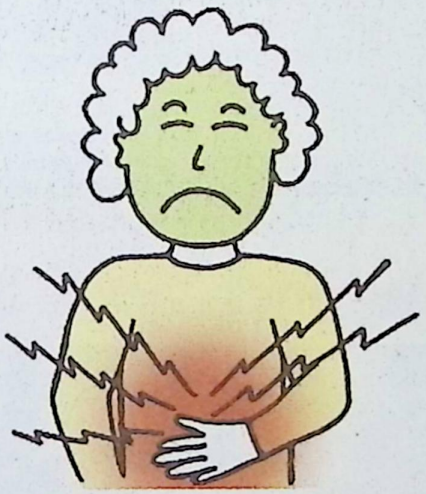
- Gastric ulcers that occur on the inside of the stomach
- Esophageal ulcers that occur inside the hollow tube (esophagus) that carries food from your throat to your stomach
- Duodenal ulcers that occur on the inside of the upper portion of your small intestine (duodenum)

Symptoms

- **Burning pain** is the most common peptic ulcer symptom. The pain is caused by the ulcer and is aggravated by stomach acid coming in contact with the ulcerated area. The pain typically may be felt anywhere from your navel up to your breastbone and it could be worse especially when you have an empty stomach. It could even flare at night and keep disappearing and returning for a few days or weeks.
- **Other severe signs:** In some cases ulcers may cause severe signs or symptoms such as vomiting of blood — which may appear red or black, dark blood in stools or stools that are black or tarry, nausea or vomiting, unexplained weight loss

Causes

Our digestive tract is coated with a mucous layer that normally protects against acid. Peptic ulcers occur when acid in the digestive tract eats away at the inner surface of the esophagus, stomach or small intestine. When the amount of acid is increased or the amount of mucus is decreased, you could develop an ulcer. The acid can create a aching open sore that may bleed.



A bacterium called Helicobacter pylori living in the mucous layer can cause inflammation of the stomach's inner layer, producing an ulcer. Also regular intake of some over-the country and pain relievers can irritate or inflame the lining of your stomach and small intestine

Few changes in your life style could save you from getting hurt!

If you feel your pain is getting severe, it is always wise to see a doctor and abide by the prescription and diet that he recommends. However you could also follow a healthy lifestyle to control this disease.

Eating good food. Having a healthy diet full with fruits, vegetables and whole grains and drinking plenty of water can help you heal your ulcer. Foods that are high in acid, such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, and coffee, may exacerbate ulcer pain. Hence be careful while taking them. Most importantly if you are accustomed with skipping your meal, leave that habit at once. Don't let your stomach empty for a longer period.

Reducing the intake of pain relievers. Stop taking incessant amount of over-the-counter medicines and pain relievers. Consult your doctor to find the lowest dose possible that still gives you pain relief. Don't forget to take your medication with meals.

Controlling stress. There are some stresses in our life which are unavoidable. Yet try to find out the sources of your stresses and try to cope with them by doing some stress relieving activities. Remember stress may worsen the signs and symptoms of a peptic ulcer.

Quitting smoking. Smoking is injurious in many ways! And one of them is it increasease stomach acid. Smoking may interfere with the protective lining of the stomach, making your stomach more susceptible to the development of an ulcer.

Limiting or avoiding alcohol. Excessive use of alcohol can irritate and erode the mucous lining in your stomach and intestines, causing inflammation and bleeding.

Protecting yourself from infections. You can take steps to protect yourself from infections, such as H. pylori, by frequently washing your hands with soap and water and by eating foods that have been cooked completely.

Source-Mayo clinic