

## Causes, Symptoms and Diagnosis of Swollen Pancreas: Commentary

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### DESCRIPTION

The pancreas is a vital organ that plays a crucial role in the digestive system and the regulation of blood sugar levels. When the pancreas becomes inflamed or swollen, it can cause a range of serious health problems. A swollen pancreas is a condition known as pancreatitis. Pancreatitis occurs when the pancreas becomes inflamed, causing the enzymes that aid in digestion to become active inside the pancreas instead of the small intestine. This can lead to damage to the pancreas and surrounding tissues. There are two types of pancreatitis: Acute and Chronic. Acute pancreatitis is a sudden inflammation of the pancreas that lasts for a short period, while chronic pancreatitis is a long-term inflammation that occurs over a period of years.

### Causes of pancreatitis

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of pancreatitis. Some of the most common causes of pancreatitis include:

**Gallstones:** One of the leading causes of pancreatitis is gallstones. Gallstones can block the ducts that drain the pancreas, causing the digestive enzymes to accumulate and trigger inflammation.

**Alcohol:** Excessive consumption of alcohol is another common cause of pancreatitis. Long-term alcohol abuse can cause inflammation and damage to the pancreas, leading to pancreatitis.

**Trauma:** Trauma to the pancreas, such as a severe blow to the abdomen, can cause inflammation and lead to pancreatitis.

**Medications:** Certain medications, such as corticosteroids, can cause pancreatitis in some people.

**Infections:** In rare cases, infections such as mumps, hepatitis B or C, and Epstein-Barr virus can lead to pancreatitis.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of pancreatitis can vary depending on the severity of the inflammation. Some of the most common symptoms of pancreatitis include:

**Upper abdominal pain:** The most common symptom of pancreatitis is upper abdominal pain that may radiate to the back.

**Nausea and vomiting:** Pancreatitis can cause nausea and vomiting, particularly after eating.

**Fever:** In some cases, pancreatitis can cause a fever.

**Rapid pulse:** An elevated heart rate is another common symptom of pancreatitis.

**Jaundice:** In severe cases, pancreatitis can cause jaundice, which is characterized by yellowing of the skin and eyes.

### Diagnosis

If you are experiencing symptoms of pancreatitis, it is important to seek medical attention immediately. The doctor will perform a physical exam and order tests to diagnose the condition.

Some of the tests the doctor may include:

**Blood tests:** Blood tests can help the doctor determine if there are elevated levels of pancreatic enzymes in your blood.

**Imaging tests:** Imaging tests such as a CT scan, MRI, or ultrasound can help the doctor visualize the pancreas and look for signs of inflammation or damage.

**Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP):** This procedure involves the insertion of a thin, flexible tube through the mouth and into the small intestine to examine the pancreas and bile ducts.

### Treatment

The treatment of pancreatitis depends on the severity of the inflammation and the underlying cause. In mild cases of acute pancreatitis, treatment may involve:

**Hospitalization:** If you are experiencing severe abdominal pain, you may need to be hospitalized to manage your pain and receive intravenous fluids.

**Fasting:** To give pancreas time to rest, doctor may be advice to fast for a period of time.

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**Received:** 01-Mar-2023, Manuscript No. PDT-23-23138; **Editor assigned:** 03-Mar-2023, PreQC No. PDT-23-23138 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 17-Mar-2023, QC No. PDT-23-23138; **Revised:** 24-Mar-2023, Manuscript No. PDT-23-23138 (R); **Published:** 31-Mar-2023, DOI: 10.35248/2165-7092.23.13.259.

**Citation:** Luther M (2023) Causes, Symptoms and Diagnosis of Swollen Pancreas: Commentary. Pancreat Disord Ther. 13:259.

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