

Peptic Ulcers: Impact on Human Health

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DESCRIPTION

Peptic ulcers are a common and often painful condition that affects the digestive system. These ulcers develop in the lining of the stomach or the first part of the small intestine, known as the duodenum. Peptic ulcers are a type of open sore that can cause discomfort and pain, especially after eating or drinking.

Peptic ulcers are commonly caused by an imbalance of acid and digestive enzymes in the stomach. This can lead to the breakdown of the protective lining of the stomach or duodenum, which can result in an ulcer. The most common cause of peptic ulcers is a bacterium called *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). *H. pylori* is a type of bacteria that can live in the stomach lining for years without causing any symptoms. However, in some cases, *H. pylori* can cause an ulcer to develop.

Other factors that can contribute to the development of peptic ulcers include long-term use of Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen can cause peptic ulcers; smoking can cause irritation and damage to the lining of the stomach, making it more susceptible to ulcers, drinking alcohol can cause inflammation and irritation of the stomach lining, increasing the risk of ulcers and although stress doesn't directly cause ulcers, it can make existing ulcers worse by increasing stomach acid production.

The most common symptom of peptic ulcers is a burning or gnawing pain in the stomach, which is often worse when the stomach is empty or after eating. Other symptoms include nausea or vomiting, loss of appetite, bloating or belching, heartburn and dark, tarry stools (indicating bleeding in the digestive tract).

Diagnosis

To diagnose a peptic ulcer, your doctor will perform a physical exam and ask about your medical history and symptoms. They may also order one or more of the following tests.

Endoscopy: This is a procedure that uses a thin, flexible tube with a camera at the end to examine the inside of the stomach

and duodenum.

Barium swallow: This is a test that involves swallowing liquid containing barium, which shows up on x-rays and helps your doctor see any abnormalities in the digestive tract.

Stool test: This test checks for the presence of *H. pylori* in the stool.

Treatment

The treatment for peptic ulcers depends on the underlying cause. If the ulcer is caused by *H. pylori*, doctor will likely prescribe a combination of antibiotics to eliminate the bacteria. In addition, doctor may recommend acid-reducing medications, such as Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) or H2 blockers, to reduce stomach acid and promote healing. Probiotics, particularly *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium* and *Saccharomyces* acts as adjuncts to antibiotics for the treatment of *H. pylori*.

If the ulcer is caused by long-term use of NSAIDs, doctor may recommend alternative pain medications or prescribe a PPI to protect the stomach lining. If the ulcer is caused by stress, lifestyle changes such as regular exercise and stress reduction techniques like yoga or meditation may be recommended. In some cases, surgery may be necessary to treat a peptic ulcer. This is typically only recommended if the ulcer is not responding to other treatments, or if there are complications such as bleeding or perforation of the stomach lining.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, peptic ulcers are typically caused by a bacterial infection or long-term use of Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). Effective treatment options include antibiotics to eliminate the bacterial infection, acid-suppressing medications to reduce the acidity in the stomach. Surgical interventions like vagotomy can be performed in severe cases. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment are important in managing peptic ulcers and preventing complications.

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