

Gastritis

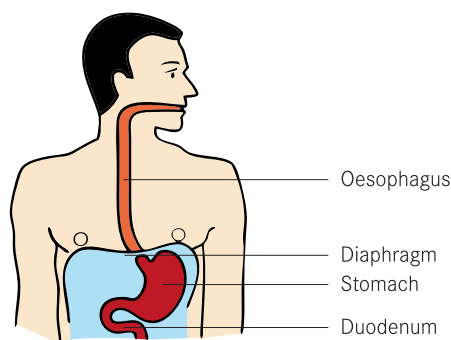
What is gastritis?

Gastritis is a medical condition in which the lining of the stomach becomes inflamed. It may occur as a brief and sudden attack, as an ongoing condition, or as part of a medical illness. It is regarded as a mild problem. Treatment may involve lifestyle changes and medication.

What causes gastritis?

A common cause of gastritis is *Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori), a bacteria that can infect the stomach lining. In some people it causes ulcers. An ulcer is a small hole in the lining of the stomach or part of small intestine (*duodenum*).

Stomach ulcers can be very painful.



Gastritis can be caused by a number of other factors, including:

- some medications (such as aspirin and ibuprofen)
- infections
- alcohol
- smoking
- coffee (and other caffeine drinks)
- anxiety or stress.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- a burning pain in the chest or abdomen
- belching (burping)
- nausea (feeling like you are going to vomit)
- vomiting
- a loss of appetite
- hiccups
- diarrhoea.

The pain may be made better or worse with food. Some people have no symptoms at all.

Treatment

Your doctor will want to confirm that you have gastritis and exclude other causes. You may be referred to a *gastroenterologist* (a doctor who specialises in stomach problems) for further tests and treatment. You may be booked in for an outpatient appointment to have specialised tests.

- A **gastroscope** – where a long thin tube with a tiny camera is passed down the *oesophagus* (food pipe) and into the stomach. A small tissue sample (biopsy) may be taken for further testing.
- A **breath test** – where you are given a special solution to swallow. If the H. pylori bacteria is present in the gut then gas by-products are released and detected in your breath.

There are several medications to treat gastritis.

- Antacids (such as *Mylanta* or *Gastrogel*) can neutralise the stomach acid. Antacids can cause constipation or diarrhoea, and may reduce absorption of some medications. For further information, speak to your local doctor or pharmacist.
- Medication to protect the stomach lining.
- Medication to reduce stomach acid.
- Antibiotics to treat the bacterial infection.

Home care

- Take your medications as directed. Finish the full course of antibiotics, even if you feel better after a few days.
- Learn what brings on or ‘triggers’ your symptoms and avoid it.
- Avoid aspirin and anti-inflammatory medications, such as ibuprofen. Talk to your doctor or health care professional about what medications you can use.
- Avoid foods that upset your stomach, such as spicy or fatty foods.
- Limit alcohol and coffee (and other products with caffeine in them).
- Do not smoke.

What to expect

Overall, gastritis is a mild problem that responds well to simple treatment. Gastritis symptoms may flare up from time to time. Sometimes the illness may become serious and result in severe pain or bleeding which needs urgent medical attention.



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Notes:

Seeking help



In a **medical emergency** go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000). Do this if you have severe pain or bleeding.



If your symptoms persist or get worse, see your local doctor or health care professional. For other medical problems see your local doctor or health care professional.



For health advice from a Registered Nurse you can call **NURSE-ON-CALL 24 hours a day** on **1300 60 60 24** for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria.*

NURSE-ON-CALL provides access to **interpreting services** for callers not confident with English. Call **1300 60 60 24**.

*Calls from mobile calls may be charged at a higher rate



Want to know more?

- Ask your local doctor or health care professional.
- Visit the **Better Health Channel**
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

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