

## Healthy Eating Guidelines For People with Peptic Ulcers

A peptic ulcer is a sore on the lining of your stomach or small intestine. Peptic ulcers include gastric ulcers that form in the stomach and duodenal ulcers that form at the beginning of the small intestine. The most common symptom of a peptic ulcer is a dull, burning pain in your stomach. Other symptoms may include bloating, burping, poor appetite, nausea, and weight loss.

Most peptic ulcers are caused by infection with the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). Long-term use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen and aspirin can also cause ulcers. Most ulcers are treated with medicines. Ulcers caused by *H. pylori* are usually treated with antibiotics. Ulcers caused by NSAIDs are often treated with medication that lowers the amount of stomach acid and by reducing or stopping NSAIDs.

No specific food has been shown to cause ulcers, but some may make your symptoms worse or may make it more difficult for your ulcer to heal. This resource provides healthy eating suggestions that can help you manage your ulcer.



### Steps you can take

- **Follow a healthy eating pattern that includes a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein foods daily.** Eating nutritious foods is important to help your ulcer heal, help prevent an ulcer, and for your overall health. Some examples of healthy eating patterns are Canada's food guide, DASH diet, or Mediterranean diet.
- **Eat higher fibre foods often.** A diet high in fibre, especially soluble fibre, may help to prevent ulcers. Aim to include good sources of soluble fibre such as vegetables, fruits, oatmeal and oat bran, barley, and beans, peas and lentils.
- **Pay attention to foods and beverages that cause you discomfort and irritate your ulcer.** Keeping a food journal can help you identify these foods.
  - Spicy foods do not cause ulcers, but they may make symptoms worse in some people. If spicy foods bother you, avoid or eat less

of them. You can continue to eat spicy foods if they don't cause discomfort.

- Coffee and caffeine increase stomach acid, but they do not seem to cause ulcers or make symptoms worse. If you have symptoms after drinking coffee or beverages with caffeine, limit your intake.
- If there are other foods or beverages that bother you, limit or avoid them. Speak with a dietitian to learn how to meet your nutrition needs if you are avoiding many foods because they cause you pain or discomfort.

### Other Considerations

- **If you have an ulcer, it is best to limit or avoid alcohol.** Alcohol increases stomach acid which may cause pain. It can also interfere with some medications for treating ulcers. A high alcohol intake increases the risk of peptic ulcers. If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation. If you have questions about alcohol use, talk with your health care provider.
- **If you smoke, talk to your health care provider for advice on quitting smoking.** Smoking can make it harder for ulcers to heal. It can also increase the risk of getting an ulcer.
- **Probiotics and treatment for *H.pylori*.** If you are taking medication for *H. pylori*, a probiotic may be beneficial to take before and during treatment. Medication and probiotics may work together to get rid of *H. pylori* and help decrease side effects of antibiotics. Speak to your health care provider about recommendations for probiotics.



### Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following resources:

- HealthLink BC [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.
- Dietitian Services Fact Sheets - Available by mail (call **8-1-1**) or visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating)

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## Notes

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