



“Knowing when it’s more than hyperacidity”

Gastric ulcer is a disease characterized by a hole in the stomach lining that causes pain and discomfort. If left unchecked, this discomfort can turn into a more serious condition that would require surgery to treat. It is commonly caused by an infection in the stomach by the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, which can withstand the very acidic environment of the stomach. Other causes of gastric ulcer include the overuse of over-the-counter painkillers (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen, and paracetamol).¹ A 2018 Survey reported that the Philippines has about 34% prevalence of *H. pylori* incidents among related gastrointestinal incidents.²

Hyperacidity is a condition characterized by increased discomfort in the stomach due to excessive levels of gastric acid. It usually produces a burning sensation. It is a symptom among common gastrointestinal problems, including gastric ulcer.³

Hyperacidity is one of the symptoms of gastric ulcer. If you are experiencing hyperacidity along with other related symptoms of gastric ulcer (listed below), then it would be good to consult your physician for a medical checkup.

Here are the signs and symptoms of gastric ulcer^{5,6}:

- Burning stomach pain
- Feeling of fullness, bloating, or belching
- Stomach pain 2 to 3 hours after eating
- Pain that is eased when taking antacids/eating
- Pain that causes sleep disturbances
- Heartburn
- Nausea

Severe signs and symptoms include^{5,6}:

- Vomiting and/or vomiting blood
- Dark blood in stools
- Difficulty in breathing
- Feeling faint, nausea
- Unexplained weight loss
- Appetite changes

The presence of hyperacidity may indicate other gastrointestinal problems such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which is characterized by heartburn and regurgitation of stomach contents.⁴

Your doctor can determine whether you have a gastric ulcer or GERD using several tests. Laboratory tests on your blood, stool, or breath are useful to test for the presence of *H. pylori*. Endoscopy may be used by your doctor to determine the location and severity of ulcers. It uses a thin, flexible, small camera that will go down your throat

and view your esophagus and stomach. Lastly, barium tests or barium swallow is an imaging test to check for problems of the gastrointestinal system. The patient will be asked to drink a liquid containing a safe form of barium that will coat your gastrointestinal tract. A series of X-ray images will be then taken to capture a clearer picture of the gastrointestinal tract and which will be used to see if there are problems in the tract.^{5,6}

References:

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DGM-2021-11-15 WEB
November 2021

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