

# Nutrition and Peptic Ulcers

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## What is a Peptic Ulcer?

A peptic ulcer is an open sore inside either the stomach or the upper part of the small intestine. A peptic ulcer in the stomach is a gastric ulcer. A peptic ulcer in the upper part of the small intestine (i.e. the duodenum) is a duodenal ulcer.

## Peptic Ulcer Causes

Two common causes of peptic ulcers include changes in the balance of stomach acid triggered by *Helicobacter Pylori* (*H. Pylori*) infection or the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

## How Diet Can Help

The following peptic ulcer diet guidelines may help reduce peptic ulcer symptoms, such as pain and discomfort. They may help reduce the risk of developing a peptic ulcer.

## Peptic Ulcer Diet Guidelines

- Limit or avoid foods that cause a large increase in stomach acid. Too much stomach acid can irritate an ulcer, which can cause pain or discomfort. These foods include:
  - Alcohol
  - Regular and decaffeinated coffee
  - Strong tea or soft drinks with caffeine
- Limit or avoid intake of foods that may directly irritate the ulcer such as:
  - Black pepper, red pepper, chili pepper
  - Other highly seasoned foods
  - Most spices are still tolerated well. You only need to limit or avoid those that cause pain or discomfort.
- Good nutrition is key to helping ulcers heal.
  - Eat well balanced meals including all food groups
  - Include a variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the day
  - Limit high fat foods (e.g. full fat dairy products, muffins, croissants or fried foods)

- Timing of meals can help reduce symptoms.
  - For duodenal ulcers, use a meal and snack pattern that reduces symptoms. For example, eating more often throughout the day (3 meals and 3 snacks per day), may help relieve pain or discomfort from the ulcer.
  - For gastric ulcers, eating less often throughout the day may help relieve pain or discomfort (3 meals and no snacks per day).
- Aim to include sources of soluble fibre at each meal to help prevent an ulcer from returning. These foods include:
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Oatmeal, oat bran, psyllium fibre (e.g. all bran buds)
  - Legumes and lentils (e.g. dried beans/peas)
- Other foods not listed here may cause you pain or discomfort. If this occurs, it may help to limit or avoid these foods. It may help to keep a food journal to keep track of these trigger foods.

### **Things to Consider**

- **Probiotics:**

Research is currently investigating the use of probiotics in the treatment of ulcers caused by H. Pylori. While no definite results are available, feel free to talk to your Dietitian about whether adding probiotics may be helpful for you.
- **Stress:**

Stress does not cause the formation of an ulcer, but it may worsen the symptoms. Try to make lifestyle changes to help manage your daily stressors.

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