

What Is Gastritis?

Gastritis is an inflammation, irritation, or erosion of the lining of the stomach. It can occur suddenly (acute) or gradually (chronic).

What Causes Gastritis?

Gastritis can be caused by irritation due to excessive alcohol use, chronic vomiting, stress, or the use of certain medications such as aspirin or other anti-inflammatory drugs. It may also be caused by any of the following:

- **Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori):** A bacteria that lives in the mucous lining of the stomach. Without treatment the infection can lead to ulcers, and in some people, stomach cancer.
- **Pernicious anemia:** A form of anemia that occurs when the stomach lacks a naturally occurring substance needed to properly absorb and digest vitamin B12.
- **Bile reflux:** A backflow of bile into the stomach from the bile tract (that connects to the liver and gallbladder).
- **Infections** caused by bacteria and viruses.
- **Smoking.**

If gastritis is left untreated, it can lead to a severe loss in blood, or in some cases increase the risk of developing stomach cancer.

What Are the Symptoms of Gastritis?

Symptoms of gastritis vary among individuals, and in many people there are no symptoms. However, the most common symptoms include:

- Nausea or recurrent upset stomach
- Abdominal bloating
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Indigestion
- Burning or gnawing feeling in the stomach between meals or at night
- Hiccups
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting blood or coffee ground-like material
- Black, tarry stools

How Is Gastritis Diagnosed?

To diagnose gastritis, your doctor will review your personal and family medical history, perform a thorough physical evaluation, and may recommend any of the following tests:

- **Upper endoscopy.** An endoscope, a thin tube containing a tiny camera, is inserted through your mouth and down into your stomach to look at the stomach lining. The doctor will check for inflammation and may perform a biopsy, a procedure in which a tiny sample of tissue is removed and then sent to a laboratory for analysis.
- **Blood tests.** The doctor may perform various blood tests such as checking your red blood cell count to determine whether you have anemia, which means that you do not have enough red blood cells. He or she can also screen for H. pylori infection and pernicious anemia with blood tests.
- **Fecal occult blood test (stool test).** This test checks for the presence of blood in your stool, a possible sign of gastritis.

What Is the Treatment for Gastritis?

Treatment for gastritis usually involves:

- Taking antacids and other drugs to reduce stomach acid, which causes further irritation to inflamed areas.
- Avoiding hot, spicy, fatty and fried foods.
- Avoiding caffeine.
- Drinking low acid orange juice.
- Avoiding smoking and being in smoky environments.
- Taking vitamins and medications after eating unless otherwise directed by your physician or medication instructions.
- For gastritis caused by H. pylori infection, your doctor will prescribe a regimen of several antibiotics plus an acid blocking drug (used for heartburn).
- If the gastritis is caused by pernicious anemia, B12 vitamin shots will be given.

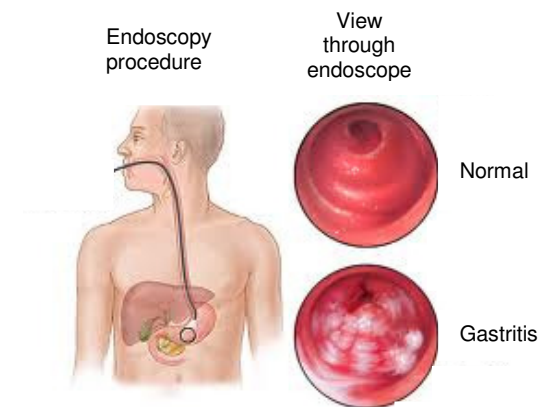
Once the underlying problem disappears, the gastritis usually does, too. You should talk to your doctor before stopping any medicine or starting any gastritis treatment on your own.

What Is the Prognosis for Gastritis?

Most cases of gastritis improve quickly once treatment has begun.

Gastritis

An informative pamphlet



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