

GASTRITIS

What is gastritis?

Gastritis is inflammation of the lining of the stomach. Inflammation means the stomach lining is raw and painful.

How does it occur?

Gastritis is the response of the stomach lining to injury. Many things can cause the inflammation. In its mildest form, gastritis can result from eating too much, eating too fast, or eating certain foods, such as hot spicy foods.

Other common causes of gastritis are:

- Infections from viral gastroenteritis in children is a common trigger.
- Infection from the bacteria H. Pylori is more common in adults.
- Some medications taken to treat pain and inflammation of other parts of the body (aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, prednisone).
- Stress (physical or emotional).
- Certain foods (caffeine, spicy foods, chocolate, peppermint).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of gastritis vary from person to person and they vary depending on the cause. Common symptoms are:

- A sharp or burning, uncomfortable feeling in your stomach
- A feeling of bloating, burping, or heartburn that moves upward in your throat.
- Loss of appetite.
- Nausea or vomiting.

Often, discomfort, pain, or vomiting occurs when lying down to sleep, first thing in the morning, or around meal times. In children, delayed gastric emptying and/or constipation can trigger or intensify symptoms.

At its worst, gastritis can cause the lining of the stomach to bleed, which may cause you to throw up either bloody or dark brown fluid. (The dark fluid, which is partially digested blood, looks like it has coffee grounds in it.) If the blood moves through your stomach into your intestines, you may have bowel movements that are bloody or black and tarry looking. If you have these symptoms, call your healthcare provider right away.

How is it diagnosed?

Gastritis is diagnosed from a careful history and physical exam. Tests that may be done include:

- Testing for blood in the stool.
- Blood testing for anemia and H.pylori infections.
- Upper endoscopy, which means a slim, flexible, lighted tube is passed down your throat into the stomach to look at the stomach lining. A sample (biopsy) of the stomach may be taken for lab tests.

How is it treated?

The treatment for gastritis depends on the cause and how severe it is. Mild gastritis generally gets better on its own. Possible treatments for the symptoms of gastritis are:

- Taking short-term antacids or other medicines that make stomach acid less acidic. As a trial, Maalox or Mylanta for younger children can be used to see if symptoms are alleviated.
(**Dosing:** 0-6months take 2.5ml up to 3 times a day; 7mo-2yrs take 5ml up to 3 times a day; 3yrs-6yrs take 10ml up to 3 times a day; older than 6yrs take 15-20ml up to 3 times a day.)

As an alternative, calcium carbonate (OTC Tums 750 mg) can be used if a chewable is preferred in older children.

(**Dosing:** 2yrs – 6yrs take 1 chew up to 3 times a day; 7yrs – 12yrs take 2 chews up to 3 times a day; older than 12yrs take as directed on packaging.)

- Taking longer-term antacids or other medicines that make stomach levels less acidic which may be considered by your physician. These longer acting medicines may take 1-2 weeks to reach maximum levels of benefit.

If infection with H.pylori is causing the gastritis, your healthcare provider will prescribe antibiotics. Once the symptoms are relieved, your provider may continue to look for the underlying cause. Treatment of the cause should help keep the gastritis from coming back.

How long will the effects last?

How long the effects last depends on what is causing the gastritis. For example, it may last just a few hours if it is caused by something you ate or drank. It may take several weeks to control symptoms that have been present for a while.

How can I take care of myself?

- Follow the instructions your healthcare provider gives you.
- Eat bland foods, such as soda crackers, toast, plain pasta, noodles, bananas, and baked or broiled potatoes and clear liquids, until symptoms stop.
- Regardless of the underlying cause of the gastritis, you can make it better or worse with what you eat and drink and the medicines you take. Avoid spicy or acidic foods. Avoid caffeine, peppermint, chocolate, and sometimes dairy until symptoms improve.
- Avoid regular or decaf coffee.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory medicine (such as aspirin and ibuprofen). If you need something for pain, acetaminophen (Tylenol) is safe if your liver is normal and you take it as directed.
- Be sure to let your healthcare provider know if your symptoms are not getting better and especially if they are getting worse.