Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD)

What is a peptic ulcer?

A peptic ulcer is a sore on the lining of your stomach or duodenum. Rarely, a peptic ulcer may develop just above your stomach in your esophagus. Doctors call this type of peptic ulcer an esophageal ulcer.

Causes of peptic ulcers include

- long-term use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin and ibuprofen
- an infection with the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*)
- rare cancerous and noncancerous tumors in the stomach, duodenum, or pancreas—known as Zollinger-Ellison syndrome (ZES)

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can cause peptic ulcers.

Who is more likely to develop peptic ulcers caused by NSAIDs?

People of any age who take NSAIDs every day or multiple times per week are more likely to develop a peptic ulcer than people who do not take them regularly. NSAIDs are a class of pain killers, such as aspirin and ibuprofen. Long-term use of NSAIDs can cause peptic ulcer disease.

Your chance of having a peptic ulcer caused by NSAIDs, also called an NSAID-induced peptic ulcer, is increased if you

- are age 70 or older
- are female
- are taking more than two types of NSAIDs or have taken NSAIDs regularly for a long time
- have had a peptic ulcer before
- have two or more medical conditions or diseases
- are taking other medicines, such as corticosteroids and medicines to increase your bone mass
- drink alcohol or smoke
Who is more likely to develop peptic ulcers caused by *H. pylori*?

About 30 to 40 percent of people in the United States get an *H. pylori* infection.\(^1\) In most cases, the infection remains dormant, or quiet without signs or symptoms, for years. Most people get an *H. pylori* infection as a child.\(^2\)

Adults who have an *H. pylori* infection may get a peptic ulcer, also called an *H. pylori*-induced peptic ulcer. However, most people with an *H. pylori* infection never develop a peptic ulcer. Peptic ulcers caused by *H. pylori* are uncommon in children.\(^2\)

*H. pylori* are spiral-shaped bacteria that can damage the lining of your stomach and duodenum and cause peptic ulcer disease. Researchers are not certain how *H. pylori* spread. They think the bacteria may spread through

- unclean food
- unclean water
- unclean eating utensils
- contact with an infected person’s saliva and other bodily fluids, including kissing

Researchers have found *H. pylori* in the saliva of some infected people, which means an *H. pylori* infection could spread through direct contact with saliva or other bodily fluids.\(^3\)

Who develops peptic ulcers caused by tumors?

People who have Zollinger-Ellison syndrome (ZES) develop peptic ulcers caused by tumors. Anyone can have ZES, yet it is rare and only occurs in about one in every 1 million people.\(^4\) However, ZES is more common among men 30 to 50 years old. A child who has a parent with multiple endocrine neoplasia External NIDDK Link type 1 is also more likely to have Zollinger-Ellison syndrome.\(^5\)

What other problems can a peptic ulcer cause?

A peptic ulcer can cause other problems, including

- bleeding from a broken blood vessel in your stomach or small intestine
- perforation of your stomach or small intestine
- a blockage that can stop food from moving from your stomach into your duodenum
- peritonitis

You may need surgery to treat these problems.


\(^3\) Momtaz H, Souod N, Dabiri H, Sarshar M. Study of Helicobacter pylori genotype status in saliva, dental plaques,
