



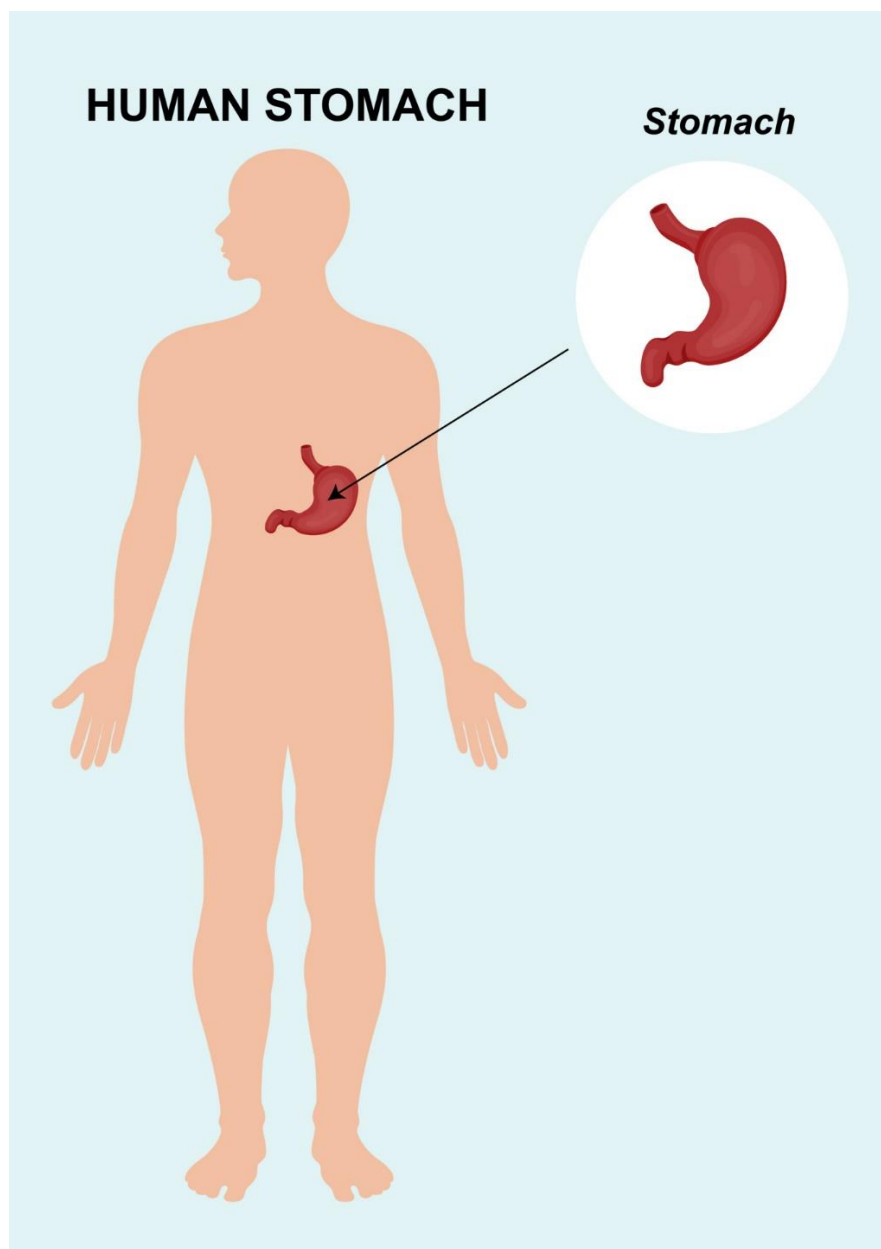
Gastritis

Information and advices for
patients

CSTH Professorial Surgical Unit

What is the stomach?

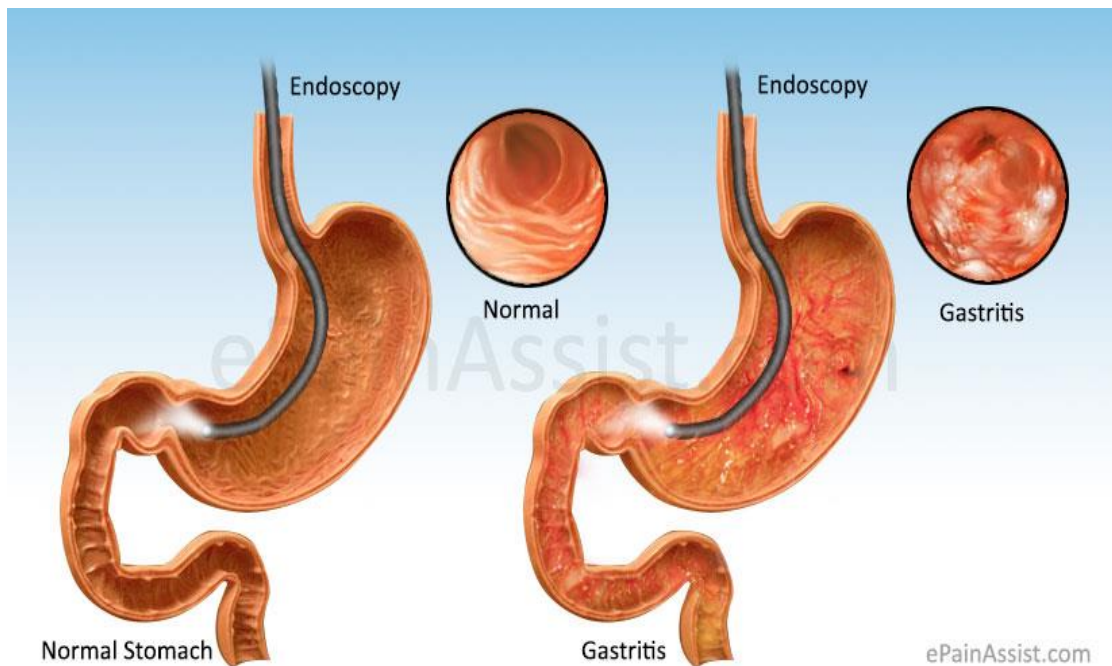
The stomach is an organ of the digestive system, located in the abdomen just below the ribs. Swallowed food is mixed with gastric juices containing enzymes and hydrochloric acid. The lining of the stomach, called the epithelium, is layered with multiple folds. The epithelium is coated with mucus (gastric mucosa) secreted by special glands.



What is gastritis?

Gastritis is a medical condition where the inner lining of the stomach becomes inflamed. Inflammation refers to a physical condition in which a part of the body becomes irritated, reddened, swollen and often painful.

It usually occurs as a brief and sudden attack (Acute gastritis) or as an ongoing condition (Chronic gastritis), or as part of a medical illness.



What are the causes of gastritis?

Gastritis can be caused by many different factors, including:

- Medication such as aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Infection with the *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria, the organism responsible for the majority of stomach and duodenal ulcers
- Alcohol and caffeine
- Smoking
- Stress
- the backflow of bile from the small intestine (duodenum)
- some allergic and immune conditions – for example, pernicious anaemia
- Exposure to radiation



What are the symptoms of gastritis?

Many people with gastritis don't have any symptoms. However, gastritis can cause following symptoms.

- Pain in your upper tummy (abdomen) just below the breastbone (sternum) is the common symptom. It usually comes and goes. It may be eased if you take antacid tablets. Sometimes food makes the pain worse. The pain may also wake you from sleep.



Other gastritis symptoms which may occur include:

- Bloating.
- Retching.
- Feeling sick (nausea).
- Being sick (vomiting).
- You may feel particularly 'full' after a meal.
- Blood in the vomit
- Blood in the bowel actions, if the stomach lining has ulcerated (this turns stools black and is called melaena)

How is gastritis diagnosed?

Diagnosing gastritis involves a variety of tests, including:

Endoscopy – a thin flexible tube is threaded down the oesophagus into the stomach. The endoscope is fitted with a small camera so the physician can look at the stomach lining. If the gastric mucosa is reddened, this may indicate gastritis. A biopsy is needed for confirmation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmsNjUOvbSs>

- **Biopsy** – small tissue samples are taken during an endoscopy and tested in a laboratory. The pathologist will look for changes, including the presence of inflammatory cells and epithelial damage.
- **Stool test** – to check for *Helicobacter pylori* infection or bleeding from the stomach
- **Breath test** -for *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) infection (this involves drinking a glass of clear, tasteless liquid that contains radioactive carbon and blowing into a bag)

How is gastritis treated?

Treatment aims to reduce the amount of acid in the stomach to relieve symptoms, allowing the stomach lining to heal and to tackle any underlying cause.

➤ Dietary and lifestyle modifications

- Eat smaller and more frequent meals.
- Avoid irritating foods, such as spicy, acidic (for example, fruit juices), fried or fatty foods.
- Stop alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Reduce stress



➤ Stop anti-inflammatory medicines

This allows the gastritis to heal. You will also normally be prescribed an acid-suppressing medicine for several weeks. This stops the stomach from making acid and allows the gastritis to heal. However, in many cases the anti-inflammatory medicine is needed to ease symptoms of joint inflammation (arthritis) or other painful conditions, or aspirin is needed to protect against blood clots. In these situations, one option is to take an acid-suppressing medicine each day indefinitely. This reduces the amount of acid made by the stomach and greatly reduces the chance of gastritis forming again.

➤ **Acid suppressing medications**

- **Antacids** - these over-the-counter medicines neutralize the acid in your stomach, which can provide rapid pain relief
- **Histamine 2 (H2) blockers** - these medicines decrease acid production and are available to buy from your pharmacist and on prescription
- **Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)**, such as omeprazole/pantoprazole/rabeprozole - these medicines decrease acid production even more effectively than H2 blockers



- **Antibiotics** - If an *H. pylori* infection is the cause of your gastritis, you'll need to take a course of antibiotics alongside a proton pump inhibitor (Triple therapy)
- **No treatment** - often gastritis is found by chance during an endoscopy. If *Helicobacter pylori* is not present, and there are no other features seen on biopsy, there is usually no need to treat the gastritis.

What are the possible complications of gastritis?

Gastritis usually resolves without any complications.

Occasionally gastritis may develop into a stomach ulcer.

Bleeding from the stomach lining may also occur. This may cause you to bring up (vomit) blood (hematemesis) and you may become anemic.

Very rarely gastritis can lead to stomach cancers.

Contacts

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