

# What is gastritis and how is it treated?

June 19 2023, by Miriam Jones Bradley, RN

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You're feeling bloated, nauseous and in pain. What is wrong?

It may be [gastritis](#), an inflammation of the [stomach](#) lining that can come

on suddenly or gradually. It can also lead to other problems, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Here, experts explore gastritis, its causes, [risk factors](#), symptoms, types and treatments, including dietary changes that may be helpful.

## Gastritis causes

Gastritis occurs when something causes a weakness or damage to the mucous-lined barrier that protects the stomach wall. According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), this allows digestive juices to damage and inflame the stomach lining. There are several diseases and conditions that can increase your risk for gastritis, including inflammatory conditions such as Crohn's disease.

## Gastritis risk factors

- **Bacterial infections:** An infection caused by *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is among the most common in the world, however not everyone with this infection will suffer from gastritis. Doctors think the vulnerability could be an inherited trait, or the result of smoking or dietary choices.
- **Regular use of pain relievers:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) are often the culprit with gastritis. Taking these meds too often or for long periods of time can cause acute or chronic gastritis. Common names of NSAIDs are Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen and Aleve.
- **Age:** As you age you develop an increased risk for gastritis since the stomach lining starts to thin over time. Older adults also tend to suffer from *H. pylori* infections or autoimmune diseases more often.
- **Excessive alcohol use:** Alcohol irritates and erodes the stomach lining. This allows the [digestive juices](#) to damage your stomach

wall. Excessive alcohol use is more likely to cause acute gastritis. In a recent study in the [American Journal of Gastroenterology](#), former president of the Spanish Gastroenterological Association [Dr. Luis Bujanda](#) states that, "Alcohol facilitates the development of superficial gastritis and chronic atrophic gastritis."

- Severe stress: Major illnesses, injuries, burns or infections can cause gastritis.
- Cancer treatment: Many chemotherapy drugs and radiation increase your risk of gastritis.
- Autoimmune gastritis: This occurs when your body attacks its own stomach cells. This is more common in patients who suffer other [autoimmune diseases](#). It can also be related to a vitamin B-12 deficiency.
- Other diseases: These include HIV/AIDS, Crohn's disease and celiac disease.

## Gastritis symptoms

- Burning, gnawing, or aching in your upper abdomen
- Indigestion
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Feeling full in your upper abdomen after eating
- Belching and hiccups
- Bloody emesis (vomit) or black stools
- A loss of appetite

## Gastritis types

There are two main types of gastritis, erosive and non-erosive, according to the [Cleveland Clinic](#):

- Erosive gastritis (reactive): This occurs when gastritis causes inflammation and wearing away of the stomach lining. Alcoholic gastritis, corticosteroids, stress from illnesses or injuries, infections, and overuse of NSAIDs are most often related to this type.
- Non-erosive: This does not cause wearing away of the stomach lining. Autoimmune gastritis is generally non-erosive.

## Gastritis diet

While doctors used to suggest bland diets for gastritis, this is no longer recommended. Below are some foods that may help with gastritis, as well as those to avoid.

Foods that may [help](#), according to Mount Sinai:

- Apples, celery, cranberries (including [cranberry juice](#)), onions, garlic and tea may prevent the growth of *H. pylori*
- Foods high in antioxidants such as fruits and vegetables
- Foods high in B vitamins and calcium, like almonds, beans, whole grains, dark leafy greens and sea vegetables such as kelp

Foods to [avoid](#), according to the Cleveland Clinic:

- Alcohol and caffeine
- Acidic foods and juices
- High fat and fried foods
- Any food or drink that irritates your stomach

## Gastritis treatment

The treatment you receive for gastritis will depend on the type you have. Your treatment might include one or more gastritis medications, the

[Cleveland Clinic](#) says.

- Antibiotics: These help get rid of bacterial infections that cause the gastritis.
- Antacids: This is the answer for how to relieve gastritis pain fast. However, these cause more side effects.
- Histamine blockers (Pepcid, Tagamet, Zantac): These decrease the production of stomach acid.
- Proton-pump inhibitors (Prilosec, Prevacid, Nexium, Protonix): These reduce the amount of acid your stomach produces.

## **Living with gastritis**

Gastritis is very treatable condition, and most patients are able to resolve it with proper medical care and lifestyle changes. If you do not see improvement with the treatment prescribed, return to the office for further evaluation. If you see black stools or bright red vomit, seek medical attention immediately.

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