



You came to the emergency department with pain in your upper belly. The doctor thinks you may have an ulcer in your stomach or the first part of your bowel (the duodenum). You are well enough to go home. This sheet explains your treatment and the warning signs.

What is it?

An ulcer is a sore in the lining of the stomach or duodenum. It can cause burning or gnawing pain in the upper belly, bloating, or feeling sick. The two most common causes are a germ called *Helicobacter pylori* and anti-inflammatory pain killers such as ibuprofen, diclofenac or aspirin. Most ulcers heal well with medicine that lowers stomach acid.

Looking after yourself at home

- Do not take ibuprofen, diclofenac, aspirin or similar pain killers unless your doctor says so. They can make an ulcer worse.
- Stop smoking. Smoking slows ulcer healing and makes ulcers more likely to come back.
- Avoid alcohol while your ulcer heals.
- Eat regular, smaller meals. Avoid any foods or drinks that you notice make your pain worse.
- If you take aspirin or a blood thinner for your heart, do not stop it on your own. Ask your doctor first.

Medicines

- Take the acid-lowering medicine you were given every day, exactly as your doctor told you, for the full course.
- If you are treated for *Helicobacter pylori*, take all the antibiotics until they are finished, even if you feel better.
- Paracetamol is usually safe for pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 1–2 weeks. Ask whether you need a test for *Helicobacter pylori*.
- Your doctor may arrange a camera test (endoscopy) to look inside your stomach, especially if you are older or losing weight.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Vomiting blood, or vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Black, sticky stools, or blood in your stools
- Sudden, severe pain in your belly, or a hard, tender belly
- Feeling dizzy, faint, very pale or sweaty
- Vomiting again and again, so you cannot keep fluids down
- Chest pain or shortness of breath



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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