



...because health matters!

# Nutrition Matters

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## Ulcers

If your doctor has told you that you have to go on a diet because you have an ulcer... don't panic! The diet is not difficult to follow once you are aware of some general guidelines and know what foods you can tolerate.

### What is an Ulcer

An ulcer is an open sore; it looks like a small crater that has worn through the lining of the stomach or gastrointestinal (G.I.) tract. While there are many types of ulcers, this diet will be limited to the dietary management of stomach or gastric ulcers and duodenal ulcers. The duodenum is the part of the G.I. tract through which food passes after leaving the stomach. Both types of ulcers are referred to as peptic ulcers and their dietary treatment is the same.

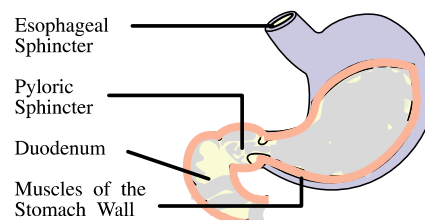
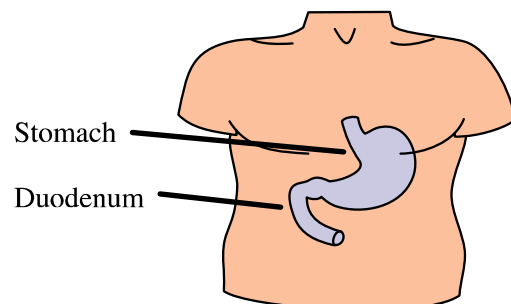
Peptic ulcers may enlarge and penetrate an artery, resulting in bleeding. The dietary treatment for bleeding ulcers is more restrictive than this diet and more in depth counselling by a dietitian is recommended.

### How Ulcers Develop

To understand how ulcers develop, you must first understand the basics of digestion. As soon as you eat, the digestive process begins. The stomach receives a message to secrete gastric acid, a strong acid that begins the

digestion, or breakdown of the food you eat. The healthy stomach and G.I. tract are protected from the gastric acid by a mucous coating.

However, in susceptible individuals, excessive acid secretion or certain foods and drugs can wear away the protective mucous coating, exposing the flesh and nerves to the gastric acid. The burning sensation you feel is from the contact of acid on this unprotected area. Obviously, the more times the ulcer area is exposed to gastric acid, the more irritated it will get and the more pain you will feel.



## How can a Diet Help?

The goal of your ulcer diet is to minimize irritation and allow the ulcer to heal by decreasing the amount of acid your body secretes. Here are some tips:

1. Eat a well-balanced diet by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.



2. Try to eat only 3 meals per day. Everytime you eat, acid is secreted. By avoiding frequent meals and/or bedtime snacks, you will minimize the number of times this happens.

3. High levels of acid secretion may be caused by physical and mental stress, cigarette smoking, aspirin, certain beverages (alcohol, caffeine-containing beverages, decaffeinated coffee), and certain foods and seasonings (black pepper, garlic, cloves, and chili powder).
4. Do not eliminate foods from your diet completely, unless it causes you repeated discomfort.

### Special Note

The diet described here provides basic dietary guidelines. It is not intended to replace specific instructions given to you by a dietitian or physician.

**Reference:** ADA/DC Manual of Clinical Dietetics, 2000.