

Herbs and Foods to Help Cure Naturally.

Peptic Ulcers

Ulcers form when powerful digestive juices start to burn through the delicate lining of the gastrointestinal tract, causing open lesions or sores. This causes a certain amount of pain, much like a burning or gnawing sensation, in the abdomen. Ulcers form for one of two reasons: too much stomach acid, or a weakness in the mucous lining that protects the digestive tract. There are two kinds of ulcers: gastric, which appear in the stomach, and duodenal, which form in the duodenum (the first part of the small intestine). Duodenal ulcers are about five times more common than gastric ulcers and about four times more common in men than in women.

In Western Medicine

Researchers have found that many ulcers are caused or exacerbated by a bacterium known as *Helicobacter pylori*. Research shows that the bacterium is present in up to 100 percent of patients with duodenal ulcer and in up to 70 percent of those with gastric ulcer. People who take large doses of stomach-irritating, anti-inflammatory drugs to manage pain are also at increased risk of developing ulcers. The major discomfort associated with peptic ulcers is described as a dull, gnawing ache in the epigastric region. The pain has a nature of rhythmicity and periodicity and usually comes on forty-five to sixty minutes after eating or during the night. This distress is relieved by food, antacids, or vomiting. Secondary symptoms include poor appetite, bloating and acid regurgitation. If peptic ulcers remained untreated, ulcers may burrow through the gastric or duodenal wall and cause gastrointestinal bleeding and perforation. Sudden sharp and persistent stomach pain accompanied by hematemesis (vomiting blood), melena (blood in the stool, the color of blood tends to be black or tar-like) and systemic prostration indicate a critical complication may arise. **If so, need to see a medical specialist immediately.** Previous focus of treatment for peptic ulcers was aimed to neutralize and decrease gastric acidity. However, ever since the discovery of *H. pylori*, antibiotic treatments have been adopted as the primary modality for those with peptic ulcer secondary to *H. pylori*.

In Oriental Medicine

From the perspective of Oriental medicine, epigastric pain including peptic ulcers is mostly the result of metabolic imbalance among liver, stomach and spleen. The function of one organ is depending on the function of another organs in Oriental medicine. They are understood not only by its function but also by its relationship with others. So, when it comes to disease, peptic ulcers in this case, we as a practitioner of Oriental medicine are trying to find the root cause of disease comprehensively at that time. It is generally accepted in Oriental medicine that as far as the stomach is in healthy state, which means in balance with another organs especially with liver in this case, and in proper diet avoiding eating late at night and eating too fast, the pathogenic factor such as *H. pylori* is not able to settle down for activation. Moreover, a greasy or spicy diet easily impairs the descending function of the stomach and leads to food retention, which results in stagnation of energetic flow of stomach meridian. Liver tends to dominate the function of stomach and/or spleen when person easily loses their temper or is always in a hurry or gets stressed in their life style. Even though recent research indicates that infection caused by *H. pylori* accounts for the primary cause in Western medicine, lifestyle factors, such as stress and diet, were still thought to be the significant factors for the formation of peptic ulcers in Oriental medicine. Mind and body is not separated. They are connected. *H. pylori* could be wiped out with antibiotics in a few weeks and acid regurgitation could be reduced by antacids. However, if patients still want to stick to previous life style, there is high possibility of recurrence unfortunately. The function of magnet and acupuncture in this case is to remove excess energy in the stomach and/or liver meridian in order to make it balanced into normal state. Excess energy in Oriental medicine generally means infection or inflammation in western terminology. Herbs and supplements is prescribed to nourish stomach and to soothe liver function to prevent further negative dominance over stomach. The idea in this treatment is to provide optimum environment for rehabilitation of temporary imbalanced function of organs by enhancing healing capability of its own.

Dietary Suggestion

What to avoid:

Alcohol, coffee, salt, chocolate, spices, sugar, fatty foods, processed foods, dairy products, and

red meat. High-protein foods such as red meat, dairy, and eggs need a lot of acid to be broken down and can increase irritation and pain. Also avoid very hot or very cold foods, as these can cause further irritation. Avoid the use of aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are associated with the formation of ulcers.

What to eat:

- 1) **Aloe Vera** – in April 1963, in the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*, Vol. 62, in a report entitled, “Aloe Vera Gel in Peptic Ulcer Therapy: Preliminary Report,” Drs. Blitz, Smith, and Gerard say that they used aloe-vera gel as the sole medication, in most cases, for the treatment of peptic ulcers in 18 patients. They state that all patients but one completely recovered, the exception being a girl who didn’t stay with the program. The researchers stated, “Clinically, aloe vera gel emulsion has dissipated all symptoms in patients considered to have incipient peptic ulcer. Duodenitis treated with aloe vera gel, resulted in uniformly excellent recovery, except in one patient. In case of peptic ulcer about which there could be little doubt...aloe vera gel emulsion provided complete recovery.”

Aloe Vera (노회, *Lu Hui*) in Oriental medicine

Properties: bitter, cold

Channels entered: Large Intestine, Liver, Stomach

Actions & Indications:

- Drain fire and guides out accumulation: for (chronic) constipation
- Strengthens the Stomach and kills parasites
- Clears heat and cools the Liver: for epigastric discomfort

Cautions: due to its cold property, dosage should be made considering the constitution of each patients. Some persons show allergy reaction to aloe vera.

Cases) One businessman says he had stomach ulcers for years and had been told by doctors to quit working and avoid stress. While he was on vacation, a fellow tourist told him about aloe vera. He began drinking aloe vera daily and started feeling much better.

He hasn't had any problems in 5 years.

Cases) A woman was scheduled for surgery for bleeding ulcers, but the night before the operation, she was detained by family problems and had to go to her sister's house to

help out. The sister had aloe juice, which this woman drank for 2 weeks without realizing its healing power. Later, when she returned home, she went to her doctor for an X-ray and no ulcer showed up. The doctor didn't believe it and took another set of X-rays. He wanted to know what she used.

- 2) **Cabbage juice** – raw cabbage juice contains considerable amounts of two compounds with anti-ulcer activity, glutamine and S-methyl-methionine. In Dr. Garnett Cheney's 1949 study of people with ulcers who were given raw cabbage juice as a treatment, 95.9 percent were pain-free in 2 weeks, 81 percent were symptom-free in 1 week, and 66 percent were pain-free in 4 days. Their diet considered of cooked vegetables, vegetable soup, and stewed meats, avoiding fried foods and dairy. All patients were required to drink 1 quart of fresh raw cabbage juice daily, in four or five doses. You may achieve the same results with more pleasing taste, by mixing it with carrot juice, or by having cabbage soup.
- 3) **Chamomile tea** – it is uniquely suited to treating digestive ailments, including ulcers, because it combines anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, and stomach soothing properties.
- 4) **Honey** – Dr. Schacht, of Weisbaden, Germany, claims to have cured many hopeless cases of gastric and intestinal ulcers with honey, without operations. But he says the news has not yet reached 99 percent of the medical profession, and those who do know it are afraid to say so for fear of being laughed at by their colleagues. Father Sebastian Kneipp, the great German herbalist of the late 1800s, wrote : “Smaller ulcers of the stomach are quickly contracted broken and healed by honey.”

Honey (벌꿀, *Yi Tang*) in Oriental medicine

Properties: sweet, slightly warm

Channels entered: Lung, Spleen, Stomach

Actions & Indications:

- Tonifies the Spleen
- Tonifies the middle burner Qi (stomach and spleen) and alleviates pain
- Moistens the Lungs and stops cough

5) **Licorice** – deglycyrrhizinated licorice, or DLG, is an extract of the licorice herb that contains anti-ulcer compounds. A three month study found DLG worked better than the popular drug, Tagamet, in helping people with duodenal ulcers.

Licorice (감초, *Gan Cao*) in Oriental medicine

Properties: sweet, neutral (raw)

Channels entered: all 12 channels

Actions & Indications:

- Tonifies the Spleen
- Moistens the Lungs and stops coughing
- Clears heat and relieves fire toxicity
- Moderates spasms and alleviates pain

Suggested Starting Formula

Aloe vera juice 70 wt%

Cabbage juice 20 wt%

Honey 10 wt%

Dosage: 3 times a day before meal

Extra tips:

Chew food thoroughly to reduce the amount of work the stomach and intestines need to do and

improve nutrient absorption. Chewing also mixes food with saliva, which is alkalizing. Relaxing when eating helps to improve digestive function. Food cannot be digested if you are eating while feeling stressed.

Bibliography

1. Anshen Shi, *Internal Medicine: Essential of Chinese Medicine* (Walnut, CA: Bridge Publishing Group, 2003)
2. R. Dubin, *Miracle Food Cures from the Bible: The Creator's Plan for Optimal Health* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999)
3. D. Yost, *The Complete Guide to Natural Cures: Effective Holistic Treatments for Everything from Allergies to Wrinkles* (New York: Lynn Sonberg Book Associates, 2009)
4. G. McKeith, *Gillian McKeith's Food Bible: How to Use Food to Cure What Ails You* (New York: Plume, 2009)
5. D. Bensky, A. Gamble, *Materia Medica: Chinese Herbal Medicine* (Seattle: Eastland Press, 1993)
6. G. Maciocia, *The Practice of Chinese Medicine: The Treatment of Diseases with Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs* (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1994)