

# Pancreatitis

Know the facts

The Pancreas is one of the body's largest glands

August 2021

## What is the Pancreas?

**The Pancreas has two roles: the Exocrine and Endocrine Pancreas**

**Exocrine** - glands that secrete substances through ducts to specific targets. Producing alkaline substances and while also making enzymes, for example: glands that make sweat, tears and saliva.

**Endocrine** - glands that secrete their substances into the bloodstream. Producing hormones such as insulin, which helps to regulate the amount of sugar circulating in the blood.

## What Causes Pancreatitis?

Approximately half of all people with acute pancreatitis have been heavy drinkers, making excessive consumption of alcohol one of the most common causes. In rare cases, pancreatitis can be caused by:

trauma or surgery in the pancreas region

viruses particularly mumps

some medications

inherited abnormalities of the pancreas

inherited disorders of metabolism

## What is Acute Pancreatitis?

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas either acute (sudden and severe) or chronic (ongoing)

Is a sudden, debilitating attack of severe upper abdominal pain. Complications include respiratory, kidney or heart failure, all of which can be fatal. Common causes can include gallstones and excessive alcohol consumption.

## Symptoms

Most often, the person will have severe abdominal pain. Other symptoms include:

Bloating

Fever

Sweating

Nausea

Vomiting

Collapse

## Is There Treatment For Acute Pancreatitis?

Treatment depends on the cause and the severity and could include:

Hospital care (in all cases) and Intensive care (severe cases)

Endoscopy - for investigative purposes

Fasting and intravenous fluids - until inflammation settles

Surgery - if gallstones are present

Lifestyle change - not drinking alcohol

Pain relief

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## What is Chronic Pancreatitis?

- Usually involves recurring bouts of pancreatic inflammation
- People who drink excessive amounts of alcohol are at an increased risk
- Over time, the pancreas may be damaged, or parts of it destroyed by continual inflammation
- Leading to digestive upsets, producing foul-smelling stools
- Damage is usually permanent

## Symptoms

Recurring or constant abdominal pain, which may be severe. Other symptoms include:

Steady weight loss

Inability to produce insulin

Pancreatic cancer

## Is There Treatment For Chronic Pancreatitis?

Treatment for chronic pancreatitis could include:

Pain relief medication - analgesics

Insulin injections - if pancreas is compromised

Supplementing digestion - taking pancreatic enzyme tablets with food

Lowering fat intake

## How do I Find Out if I Have Pancreatitis?

Talk to your Doctor, pancreatitis is usually diagnosed quickly, with an examination of the abdomen, confirmed with various tests which can include:

blood tests

Ultrasound - checks for the presence of gallstones

physical examination

X-rays

CT scan - 3D picture of the pancreas

MRI scan - takes pictures of the abdomen

MRCP- takes pictures of the ducts of the pancreas helps determine the cause and damage

## More Information

Visit Victorian Government Department of Health - Better Health:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/pancreatitis#bhc-content>

## Disclaimer

The information provided is in no way to replace the advice and consult from a health professional.

## Reference

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