

These are inflammation and disorders of the pancreas

What to look for

For acute pancreatitis:

- severe pain in the stomach region 12 - 24 hours after digestion of a large meal.
- fever.
- nausea or vomiting.
- clammy skin.
- abdominal tenderness.
- fast pulse.

For chronic pancreatitis the above symptoms plus:

- foul, bulky stools.

The pancreas has many functions. Two very important ones are insulin production (needed to regulate the sugar in the bloodstream) and producing digestive enzymes to help transport the nutrients into the body. If the pancreas becomes inflamed, the pancreatic juices become destabilised and cause the enzymes to digest pancreatic tissue.

If the symptoms of pancreatitis are not treated, you may develop cysts, abscesses, and leaks of pancreatic fluid into the abdomen, which can lead to other long-term problems.

Causes

Acute pancreatitis is associated with excessive alcohol drinking, gallstones, viral and bacterial infections, drugs, and blockage of the pancreatic duct.

More than half the people who develop chronic pancreatitis are heavy drinkers.

You are strongly advised to seek professional medical assistance if you suspect you may have this condition. Your doctor will give you an examination and possibly a blood test to help him or her diagnose your condition.

Traditional Treatment

Conventional medicine treats pancreatitis with drugs, diet, and surgery.

Prevention

- Limiting yourself to one or two alcoholic drinks per day may significantly lessen your chances of developing pancreatitis.
- General health considerations such as a good diet and lifestyle, limit your stress and keep your weight in control.

When to seek further professional advice

- you think you may have pancreatitis.