

These are holes or loss of tissue in the lining of the stomach or the duodenum.

### **What to look for**

- burning upper abdominal pain.
- black, or bloody stools.

The most common type are duodenal. The second most common are gastric ulcers, which develop in the stomach.

Duodenal ulcers, whose typical symptoms are recurrent upper abdominal pain and a bloated feeling after eating are fairly common in people as they become older.

Fortunately, stomach ulcers are relatively easy to treat; in many cases they are cured with antibiotics. They should however, always be monitored and controlled.

### **Causes**

It is not known exactly why the lining of the stomach area is unable to withstand the acidic digestive juices which make ulcers occur. Doctors debate whether ulcers occur as a result of stress, hereditary, and poor dietary habits. It is believed that such influences contribute to a build up of these stomach acids that erode the protective lining of the stomach, duodenum, or oesophagus.

Some doctors and researchers believe that bacteria cause stomach ulcers. This is still being debated. There are certain triggers which need to be controlled in order to avoid ulcers. They are - heavy use of alcohol, analgesics and smoking.

Your doctor will perform tests on you before diagnosis is possible.

### **Traditional Treatment**

Medications are usually used to treat mild to moderate ulcers. If the cause is bacterial, antibiotics can cure the ulcer. For recurrent, severe cases that do not respond to medication, surgery may be necessary. Your doctor will attempt to control the digestive juices and strengthen the lining of the stomach. Surgical procedures are less of an ordeal these days.

### **Dietary Considerations**

Supplements of A, B6, E, Zinc, Magnesium may help the condition. However always speak to us before taking supplements.

### **Personal Care**

- Cut down on milk.
- Not all antacids and pain relievers will help your condition - ask our pharmacist which ones will suit.
- Don't overdose on iron supplements.
- Learn how to handle stress.

### **Prevention**

- Avoid foods that irritate your stomach.
- Eat foods with high fibre content.
- Stop smoking.
- Practice moderation in food and alcohol consumption.

### **When to seek further professional advice**

- you have symptoms of a stomach ulcer and you develop a severe back pain, vomit blood or become cold and clammy.