

# Star Special

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DIGESTIVE HEALTH & YOU

## The cause of stomach ulcers

STOMACH ulcers affect millions of people worldwide and have long been a concern due to their potential impact on general health and overall well-being. According to Damansara Specialist Hospital 2 consultant physician, gastroenterologist and hepatologist Dr Jaideep Singh, no specific groups of people are predisposed to stomach ulcers and anyone can be at risk.

Some lifestyle factors contribute to stomach ulcers occurring. These include consuming alcohol, smoking cigarettes, lack of fibre in your food and taking more than the prescribed amount of painkillers.

Stomach ulcers occur when the lining of the mucosa in the stomach breaks. Dr Jaideep notes that stomach ulcers are usually caused by *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) bacteria or the consumption of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for an extended period or in high dosage.

"There are many causes of stomach ulcers. Certain medications, especially painkillers such as NSAIDs, are commonly associated with stomach ulcers. Infections, such as *H. pylori*, are one of the prevalent causes that we have in Malaysia.

"If you consume an excessive amount of painkillers over a certain amount of time, it breaks the protective barrier that we



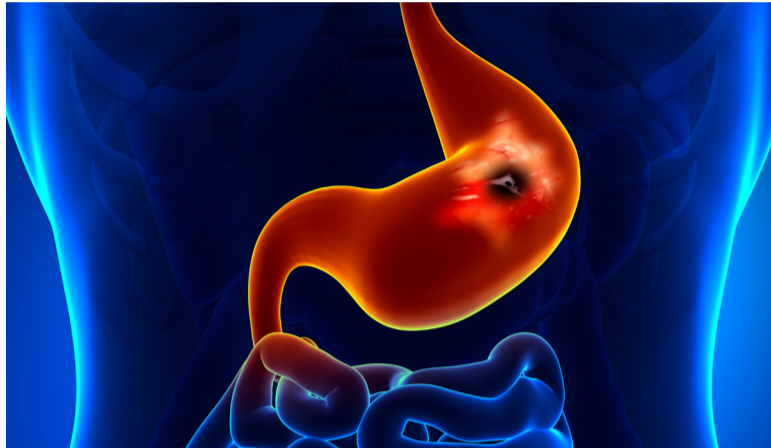
Dr Jaideep Singh.

have in our stomach. Once the layer is breached, you're susceptible to acid production in the stomach. The acid goes to the breached areas and causes the lining to break and then over time, it develops an ulcer. *H. pylori* infection also causes these ulcers because when it goes into your stomach, it gets embedded in the inside of the stomach wall, and that causes a breach of the lining, erosion, and subsequently ulcers," Dr Jaideep explains.

He adds that anxiety and high-stress levels can also cause stomach ulcers if not treated properly.

### Know your symptoms

Stomach ulcers are often associated with upper abdominal



Stomach ulcers are usually caused by *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) bacteria or the consumption of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

and persisting pain after eating. Burping up a lot of wind, and feeling gaseous and bloated are some of the symptoms experienced by people with peptic ulcers. Additionally, if it worsens, it may lead to internal bleeding. The final stages of the ulcer will turn into a deep ulcer and a person may vomit blood as a result.

Indigestion, heartburn, appetite and weight loss are other possible symptoms caused by stomach ulcers, but these are less common. Stomach ulcers can also be fatal in some cases. Dr Jaideep notes that an affected area could become perforated which can lead to torrential bleeding and exposed blood

vessels. This can also lead to vomiting blood and decreased haemoglobin levels which could be fatal.

### Prevention is better than cure

There is a maximum number of NSAIDs doses that patients can consume depending on their health condition. Instead of taking NSAIDs, they can take different classes of painkillers that are not under the NSAID group. The best option will be to try to deal with the condition differently and not be too dependent on painkillers.

Dr Jaideep explained that *H.*

*pylori* can be transmitted through the faecal-oral route and to prevent transmission, unhygienic practices should be avoided, especially when handling food. Basic hygiene such as washing hands frequently must also be practiced.

### What to do when stomach ulcers recur?

Stomach ulcers can recur even after treating it with medication. Excessive smoking or drinking and an imbalanced diet can cause it to recur. Bad habits such as not eating on time, missing meals and eating foods that worsen acid production in the stomach should also be avoided. If the ulcer is caused by an *H. pylori* infection, it can get reinfected later despite previously being treated.

By adopting a holistic approach that combines appropriate medical treatments, lifestyle modifications and stress management techniques, the risk of developing stomach ulcers is greatly reduced, promoting optimal digestive health. Early detection and timely intervention also play a crucial role in preventing complications and ensuring a faster recovery.

■ For more information, call 03-7717 3000.

ACCORDING to the *Malaysia National Cancer Registry Report 2012-2016*, colorectal cancer is the second most common form of cancer diagnosed in both men and women in Malaysia. Therefore, doctors recommend screening tests to help prevent colon cancer.

An estimated 50% to 75% of colorectal cancers can be prevented through lifestyle changes like healthy eating, regular physical activity and maintaining an ideal body weight, according to the Colon Cancer Foundation.

According to MSU Medical Centre consultant general and colorectal surgeon Dr Mohd Zailani Mat Hassan, "If you care for your colon and seek ways to keep it healthy, consume colon-friendly foods that are proven to reduce the chances of diseases like diverticulosis, irritable bowel syndrome and colon cancer."

Here is what you should eat to maintain good colon health:

**Veggies and healthy fats** – People who eat high-fibre diets are less likely to develop the disease. This means an intake of approximately 25-30g of whole, unprocessed, plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables and grains. High dietary fibre is good

for weight loss, avoiding constipation, supplying prebiotics, better regulating your blood sugar level, and lowering both 'bad' LDL and total cholesterol. Lowering your cholesterol reduces blood pressure and your risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

A plant-based diet made up of a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables provides nutrients or phytochemicals that offer many health benefits such as a strengthened immune system and reduced inflammation.

Consume healthy fats found in olive oil, salmon rich in omega-3, avocados and nuts. Omega-3 fats in fish alter the colon function and reduce the risk of colon cancer. Sufficient intake can reduce inflammation in the colon and improve gut health.

**Less red meat consumption** – According to the American Cancer Society, the risk of colon cancer increases by 15% to 20% if you consume 100g of red meat (the equivalent of a small hamburger) or 50g of processed

meats like sausage, bacon or hot dogs per day. Prioritise chicken, turkey and fish over beef, pork and lamb. Limit cooking red meats at very high temperatures as this causes the meat to form chemicals called heterocyclic amines and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are linked to an increased cancer risk.

**Less sugar** – Studies have found that people with ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease often have diets high in sugar and low in fibre. Foods high in sugar are often high in calories and can lead to weight gain and obesity. Limit added sugar to less than 25g a day. Naturally occurring sugars in fruit and dairy are acceptable and can provide beneficial vitamins and minerals.

**Whole grains** – The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend all adults eat at least half of their daily grains as whole grains, about three to five servings. Readily available whole grains include barley, quinoa, whole wheat flour, wild and brown rice and oatmeal. These foods contain more colon-

## Healthy diet for a healthy colon



Dr Mohd Zailani Mat Hassan.

friendly vitamins, minerals, fibre, essential fatty acids, antioxidants and phytochemicals than white flour and white rice.

**Food that diversifies your gut microbiome** – A healthy colon contains billions or even trillions of beneficial bacteria per millilitre. A diet containing a variety of nutrient-dense food types, fibre-containing foods and probiotic food sources helps to shape a colon's microbiota. A

plant-based or Mediterranean-style eating pattern has been shown to diversify the gut microbiota as well as reduce the risk of developing colorectal cancer. Foods containing probiotics can also help to foster growth of the gut flora in the colon. Those looking to increase their intake of probiotics may try foods such as yoghurt, kimchi, kombucha, tempeh, kefir, miso and sauerkraut.

**Less alcohol and don't smoke** – If you choose to drink alcohol, do so moderately. That means no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. Quit smoking.

Dr Zailani explains while eating right can help keep your colon happy, the most powerful way to prevent colon cancer is through cancer screening. Most authorities recommend undergoing cancer screening at the age of 50 for patients of average risk. However, those in high-risk groups such as family history of colon cancer, Crohn's disease or Ulcerative colitis, a colonoscopy should be done much earlier.

# Helping someone live another day

DID you know that the liver is the only internal organ that can regenerate itself? Located on the right upper side of the abdomen, the liver is one of our biggest internal organs and is involved in almost every bodily process. It is responsible for several critical functions which include:

- Removing bacteria and toxins from the blood
- Preventing infection and regulating immune responses
- Processing nutrients, medications and hormones
- Producing bile, which helps the body absorb fats, cholesterol and fat-soluble vitamins
- Making proteins that aid in blood clotting

The liver protects your body in a way that even if you lose up to 75% of your liver, the remaining liver cells can regenerate by growing and multiplying to form a mass of liver tissue.

Liver transplants can relieve suffering, improve and even extend the life of patients. In most cases, when a patient

“The liver protects your body in a way that even if you lose up to 75% of your liver, the remaining liver cells can regenerate by growing and multiplying to form a mass of liver tissue.”

needs a liver transplant, he usually receives one from a deceased donor. However, because the liver can regenerate itself, liver transplants via a living donor are possible.



Liver transplants from living donors may be able to help patients avoid further potential health complications.

### Why living liver donors?

The number of patients waiting for a liver transplant greatly exceeds the number of available donors. With the number of patients awaiting transplants on the rise every year, living donor transplants provide liver disease patients with an alternative to waiting for a liver to become available only after pledged donors pass on.

Having access to a living donor also allows the patient to avoid potential health complications that can occur during the waiting period for a liver. Most living liver donors

are family members or close friends of the recipient.

### The procedure

A donor provides part of his healthy liver to replace parts of the recipient's diseased liver. To be considered for a living donor transplant, both the donor and recipient have to go through a series of health and psychological evaluations.

This will help determine a match for liver donation that is based on age, blood type and organ size, among other factors. Both the recipient and donor will be informed by their doctors about the entire transplant

procedure alongside its benefits and risks.

On the day of the transplant, the surgeon will operate on the donor first, removing a portion of the donor's liver for the transplant. The surgeon will then remove the diseased liver from the recipient and replace it with the donated liver section, connecting it to the blood vessels and bile duct.

In the following weeks of recovery, both the donor's and recipient's livers will grow to the size of an average liver but will not be the same structurally. Most liver transplant survivors return to normal activity and go on to lead fulfilling lives.



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# Dealing with constipation

CONSTIPATION is a digestive problem where an individual has irregular bowel movements that are less than three times a week. Generally, a person with constipation has difficulty emptying their bowels, usually associated with dry and hard stools. Some common causes of constipation include:

- **Insufficient fibre intake** – Individuals with insufficient dietary fibre intake are prone to constipation as fibre helps promote regular bowel movement by increasing the stool weight and softening the stool.
- **Insufficient fluid intake** – Fluid and fibre work together to soften the stools. Insufficient fluid intake can cause the stools to become hard and difficult to pass.
- **Physical inactivity** – Exercise helps stimulate the contraction of intestinal muscles. A physically inactive individual tends to have lesser bowel movements.
- **Pregnancy** – Pregnant women are more susceptible to constipation due to

hormonal changes and physical changes as the uterus may compress the intestine and slow down the passage of food<sup>(1)</sup>.

- **Ageing** – The composition of gut microbiota changes with age, most markedly by a declining level of one of the good bacteria, Bifidobacteria, which might increase the risk of constipation among the elderly.

- **Overuse of laxative** – Laxative is often used to relieve constipation. However, regular use or overuse of laxatives may lead to dependency, decreased intestinal function and subsequently increases the risk of developing lazy bowel syndrome in which our bowels move abnormally slow and sluggish.

Constipation is a preventable lifestyle disorder and can be improved through lifestyle changes such as exercising regularly and practising a healthy balanced daily diet which includes a variety of nutrients particularly fibre. A high-fibre diet has been associated with bowel regularity and improved

bowel function. In addition to that, numerous research studies have shown that consuming probiotic-rich food can also nourish the gut and improve intestinal

Biogrow ProGut helps combat constipation with its formulated oat fibres.

function by balancing gut microbiota and bowel frequency.

## A natural way to manage bowel movement

Biogrow ProGut is a natural food supplement formulated with dual action from the well-researched oat fibre (soluble and insoluble fibres) from Oat BG22 fibre powder and B. lactis, BB-12 probiotic strain – the world’s best documented Bifidobacterium with over 300 scientific publications including over 130 clinical studies<sup>(3)</sup>.

- One to two sachets daily provide a synergistic effect for improved intestinal function and regular bowel movement.

- Each sachet (≈7g) contains 2.4g of soluble and insoluble fibres and a guaranteed potency of one billion CFU of live probiotic cultures. The dose of one billion CFU of B. lactis, BB-12 has been clinically proven and shown to have the desired benefits on improved gastrointestinal health and bowel frequency<sup>(2)</sup>.

- Direction for use: Take one to two sachets daily after meals or anytime convenient. Mix one sachet (≈7g) in a glass of cold water, fruit juice, soy milk or sprinkle onto cold cereal, salad and yoghurt. Do not mix with hot water.

Biogrow ProGut is suitable for anyone who wants to maintain or improve gut health as it offers a natural way to manage bowel movements with the power of fibre and probiotics. Biogrow ProGut is available in all leading pharmacies nationwide and the Biogrow Official Store at Shopee Mall.

This article is provided by Legosan (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.

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■ For more information, call 03-7956 2220 (Mondays to Fridays; 9am-5pm) or email info@biogrow.com.my.

## References:

- <sup>(1)</sup> American Pregnancy Association, 2019. <https://americanpregnancy.org/>
- <sup>(2)</sup> Eskesen et al. (2015). *British Journal of Nutrition* (2015), 114, 1638-1646.
- <sup>(3)</sup> Information provided by Chr. Hansen A/S, Denmark.





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Care for Life

# Global burden of hepatitis

HEPATITIS essentially means inflammation of the liver. If left undetected and untreated, this inflammation can progress to scarring (fibrosis), cirrhosis or even liver cancer.

Although the most well-known causes of hepatitis are viruses, other reasons can inflame the liver:

- **Autoimmune diseases** – The immune system of the body attacks healthy cells instead of or along with fighting harmful external disease-causing agents.

- **Substance abuse** – Heavy alcohol consumption or prolonged usage of certain drugs can cause liver inflammation.

- **Infection** – Liver infection caused by bacteria can sometimes result in hepatitis.

## The biggest cause

Viruses remain a major cause of hepatitis with global epidemics, outbreaks, illness burden and the number of deaths caused every year. There are five main kinds, namely hepatitis A, B, C, D and E.

Hepatitis B and C are considered more dangerous as they can not only cause chronic liver disease, but when both occur simultaneously, they make up one of the major causes of liver cancer and cirrhosis. While hepatitis A and E usually spread through ingestion of contaminated water and food, hepatitis C, D and E spread



Symptoms of hepatitis include jaundice, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and fatigue.

through contaminated bodily fluids.

The main symptoms of hepatitis include jaundice (yellowing of the eye whites and skin), nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and fatigue. However, acute hepatitis sometimes occurs with no or very limited symptoms as well.

## Knowledge saves lives

Awareness is the only way to

reduce the global burden of illness and deaths caused by hepatitis, especially viral hepatitis. Below are some facts about each kind:

- **Hepatitis A** – Most common in countries and places that have poor sanitation. This virus is usually present in the faeces of an infected person and thus spreads easily through water and food in places that lack proper sanitation. In most cases, the effects of hepatitis A are mild,

with most infected people making full recoveries and remaining immune for life, but in some cases, the infection can become fatal. An effective preventative method is the hepatitis A vaccine.

- **Hepatitis B** – Spreads easily and quickly through contaminated body fluids such as blood and semen, and pregnant women infected with it can pass it on to their unborn child. It also presents a significant risk for healthcare workers too because the virus spreads through contaminated body fluids and even a small prick from an infected needle can cause it. The good news is that hepatitis B is preventable through vaccination.

- **Hepatitis C** – Mostly passed through infected blood transfusions and use of infected needles for drug use, it can also spread through sexual intercourse. There is currently no vaccine available for this infection.

- **Hepatitis D** – Only occurs in people who are also infected with hepatitis B. The outcome of concurrent hepatitis B and D infections can be extremely serious. However, hepatitis D can be easily prevented by getting the hepatitis B virus vaccine.

- **Hepatitis E** – Spreads through contaminated water and food. It is very common in developing countries and is also

“Hepatitis essentially means inflammation of the liver. If left undetected and untreated, this inflammation can progress to scarring (fibrosis), cirrhosis or even liver cancer.”

recognised as a cause of disease outbreaks in developed nations. There is a vaccine for hepatitis E, but it is unfortunately not widely available.

The best thing you can do to protect your liver from these viruses is by educating yourself and the people around you on how hepatitis is spread and ways to avoid or sanitise contaminated water and food. It is also up to you as an individual to prevent hepatitis caused by non-viral factors such as substance abuse, so play your part in keeping yourself and others safe.

## Having IRREGULAR bowel movement?



No Added Sugar



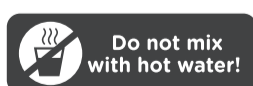
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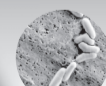


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