

## Gastritis and Diet

Gastritis refers to a group of conditions, all of which cause inflammation of the stomach lining. Usually a mucous-lined barrier protects the stomach from digestive acids. In gastritis, this barrier becomes weakened, and your digestive juices damage and inflame the lining. Gastritis may have a sudden onset or may develop more slowly over a period of time.

Some people with gastritis have no symptoms. Symptoms of gastritis include:

- Indigestion
- Hiccups
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- A sense of “fullness” after meals
- Dark stools
- Vomiting blood

*Helicobacter pylori* infection can cause chronic gastritis in some people. This is the same bacteria that cause peptic ulcers. Other infections caused by viruses, parasites, or fungus also can lead to the development of gastritis. Frequent use of certain painkillers can lead to either acute or chronic gastritis.

The risk of gastritis increases with age, as the stomach lining thins and the chances of having either an *H pylori* infection or an autoimmune disorder increase. Alcohol irritates and erodes the stomach lining, and excessive use can lead to acute gastritis. Severe physical stress from injury or illness can lend itself to the development of acute gastritis. Bile reflux from pyloric valve dysfunction or pyloric valve removal allows bile to enter the stomach and leads to gastritis.

Autoimmune gastritis refers to a condition in which the body attacks the cells that make up the stomach lining. Autoimmune gastritis often occurs in people with other autoimmune diseases and also is associated with vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency. People with human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), Crohn’s disease, or sarcoidosis are at an increased risk for developing gastritis.

Cigarette smoking, consumption of coffee or acidic beverages, or the consumption of caustic or corrosive substances can cause irritation. Some forms of gastritis will resolve after a person quits drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, or taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs).

### Avoid During Acute Episode

- Acidic beverages - including coffee (both caffeinated and decaffeinated) carbonated beverages, and fruit juice with citric acid.
- Alcohol
- Caffeine - coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and tea.
- Fried foods
- Processed snack foods – chips, cookies, doughnuts, cakes etc
- Tough red meats
- Fast foods
- Spicy foods
- Some raw vegetables; cruciferous vegetables
- Consuming fluids with meals – separate your fluids from your meals by 30 minutes.
- Possibly milk and dairy products

### Prevention

Whole foods including lean meats, skinless poultry, fish and seafood, low fat dairy in moderation, whole grains and cereals, an abundance of fruits and vegetables.

Healthy cooking methods that avoid frying, deep frying and heavy fatty or creamy sauces.

Smaller more frequent meals as opposed to very large meals.

Flavonoids are good – stop the growth of *H pylori* –

- Found in apples, celery, cranberries, onions, garlic, and tea.

### Alternative Therapies

- Omega-3 fatty acid supplements
- Probiotics
- Cranberry, capsaicin, and peppermint supplements

\*Always talk to your doctor before beginning to take any supplements or herbal preparations.

If left untreated, gastritis can lead to peptic ulcers in the stomach or first part of the intestine and bleeding. Some forms of chronic gastritis increase the risk of stomach cancer.