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### What are Peptic ulcers?



Open sores that develop in the lining of the stomach

### What causes ulcers?



H. Pylori  
Bacteria



Aspirin



Alcohol



Smoking



Stress



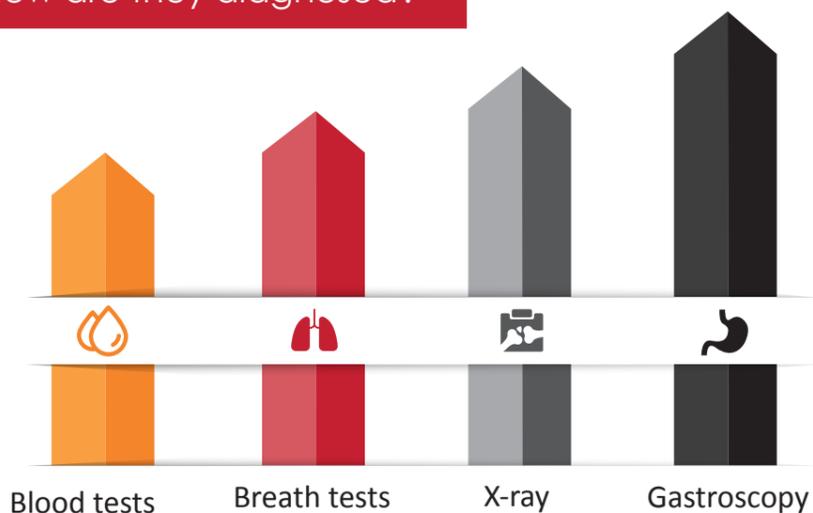
Caffeine

### What are the symptoms?

Pain in the upper abdomen



### How are they diagnosed?



## Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

#### 1 What are peptic ulcers?

Peptic ulcers, or simply ulcers, are open sores that develop in the lining of the stomach or duodenum. The duodenum is the first part of the small intestine, just after the stomach. Ulcers in the oesophagus are also considered peptic ulcers. It is important to note that having gastric reflux is not the same as having an ulcer, although ultimately reflux leads to the development of ulcers.

#### 2 What causes ulcers?

Many conditions and substances are responsible for causing ulcers, however the most common ones are an infection by a bacteria called H. Pylori, and anti-inflammatory tablets, especially aspirin. Others include alcohol, smoking, stress, and caffeine.

#### 3 What are the symptoms?

People with ulcers mainly complain of pain in the upper abdomen. While it is not always possible to tell the location of an ulcer based on symptoms alone, generally ulcers in the stomach tend to be painful soon after eating, while those in the duodenum are mainly painful during periods of hunger, and are relieved by food. Symptoms can also be as a result of the complications, e.g. vomiting due to inability to swallow from strictures, or anaemia from bleeding.

#### 4 How are they diagnosed?

Very often patients are treated based on typical symptoms alone, but there are a number of invasive and non-invasive tests available. These include blood tests, breath tests, special types of x-rays taken after drinking a substance called barium, and directly looking at the stomach with a camera and removing a piece of the lining and sending it to the laboratory for analysis. This is known as a Gastroscopy.

#### 5 What is the treatment?

Identifying the cause is the first step to treatment, and then directing behaviour towards eliminating it. These include stopping the use of Aspirin; quitting smoking; using alcohol after meals only and decreasing the volume consumed at a time; and administering antibiotics to eradicate H. Pylori infection. Antacids are given to coat the lining of the stomach so as to minimize irritation by acid. Another line of treatment is to suppress or reduce the amount of acid produced. Surgery and other radical interventions are considered when there are complications or no response to routine treatment.

#### 6 What are the complications?

The most common complication is bleeding from the ulcer, and this can be quite severe, depending on where the ulcer is. An ulcer can grow quite deep, eventually perforating or creating a hole in the stomach or part of duodenum it's growing in. In addition, ulcers are also known to cause an obstruction in the outlet of the stomach, leading to the inability for food and liquids to pass. And lastly, ulcers are one of the causes of stomach cancer.