

# Healthy Eating Guidelines

## For People with Peptic Ulcers

Most peptic ulcers are caused by infection with the bacteria *helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). Another common cause is the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), including acetylsalicylic acid, also known as ASA. Treatment of ulcers focuses on fighting the *H. pylori* infection with antibiotics and/or decreasing the amount of acid made in the stomach to help lower the pain and help healing.

No food has been shown to cause ulcers, but some may make your symptoms worse or may make it more difficult for your ulcer to heal.

This resource will help you:

- | choose foods to help your stomach or intestinal ulcer heal
- | avoid foods or beverages that may be irritating or cause you to make more stomach acid.



### Steps you can take

The following diet suggestions can help you manage your ulcer:

- | Use "Canada's Food Guide" [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guides.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guides.html) to help you plan meals using a variety of foods from all 4 food groups. Good nutrition is important for ulcers to heal. Speak with a dietitian to learn how to meet your nutrition needs if you are avoiding foods because they cause you pain or discomfort.
- | Aim to include good sources of soluble fibre at each meal. Vegetables, fruits, oatmeal and oat bran, barley, peanut butter, nuts, nut butters, and legumes such as lentils, dried beans, and peas are good sources. A diet high in soluble fibre may help to prevent ulcers from coming back.
- | Drink caffeine containing beverages in moderation. The recommendation is no more than 400mg of caffeine per day, which is

the same as about three 250 mL (3 cups) of coffee. Caffeine increases stomach acid, but it does not seem to cause ulcers or make their symptoms worse. Refer to Additional Resources for more information on caffeine in foods and beverages.

- | If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. The recommendation is a limit of 15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day on most days, or 10 drinks a week for women, with no more than 2 drinks a day on most days. A standard drink is equal to:
  - | 341mL (12oz) of beer (5% alcohol)
  - | 142mL (5oz) of wine (12% alcohol)
  - | 43mL (1.5oz) of liquor/spirits (40% alcohol)

Alcohol increases stomach acid so it can interfere with ulcer treatment. If you have questions about alcohol use, talk with your doctor or health care provider.

- | Spicy foods do not cause ulcers, but they may make symptoms worse in some people. If spicy foods bother you, avoid or eat less of them. You can continue to eat spicy foods if they don't cause you discomfort.
- | Listen to your body. If there are other foods or beverages that bother you, limit or avoid them. Discuss these with your doctor or health care provider.

## Other tips

- | Smoking increases the risk of ulcers and also makes them harder to heal. To get help to quit smoking, call or visit QuitNow at 1-877-455-2233 or [www.QuitNow.ca](http://www.QuitNow.ca), or talk to your doctor or health care provider.
- | Talk with your doctor or health care provider about your use of medications containing caffeine, acetylsalicylic acid, and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).



## Additional Resources

Health Canada's fact sheet "Caffeine in Food" is available at [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-)

[additives/caffeine-foods/foods.html](#).

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## Notes

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Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating) or call 8-1-1 (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.