Pancreatitis

The pancreas is a large gland behind the stomach and close to the first part of the small intestine. It secretes digestive juices into the small intestine through a tube called the pancreatic duct. The pancreas also releases the hormones insulin and glucagon into the bloodstream.

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. It happens when digestive enzymes start digesting the pancreas itself. Pancreatitis can be acute or chronic. Either form is serious and can lead to complications.

Acute pancreatitis occurs suddenly and usually goes away in a few days with treatment. It is often caused by gallstones. Common symptoms are severe pain in the upper abdomen, nausea, and vomiting. Treatment is usually a few days in the hospital for intravenous (IV) fluids, antibiotics, and medicines to relieve pain.

Chronic pancreatitis does not heal or improve. It gets worse over time and leads to permanent damage. The most common cause is heavy alcohol use. Other causes include cystic fibrosis and other inherited disorders, high levels of calcium or fats in the blood, some medicines, and autoimmune conditions. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, weight loss, and oily stools. Treatment may also be a few days in the hospital for intravenous (IV) fluids, medicines to relieve pain, and nutritional support. After that, you may need to start taking enzymes and eat a special diet. It is also important to not smoke or drink alcohol.

NIH: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Start Here

- Pancreatitis [http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pancreatitis/basics/definition/CON-20028421?p=1] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Diagnosis/Symptoms

- Amylase Test [https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/amylase/tab/test] (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)
- Fecal Fat: The Test [https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/fecal-fat/tab/test] (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)
- Lipase Test [https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/lipase/tab/test] (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)
- Trypsin and Chymotrypsin Test [https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/trypsin/tab/test] (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)
- Trypsinogen Test [https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/trypsinogen/tab/test] (American Association for Clinical Chemistry)

Living With

- Nutrition Advice and Recipes [http://www.pancreasfoundation.org/patient-information/patients-family-information/nutrition-advice-recipes/]
Related Issues


Specific Conditions

- Acute Pancreatitis (Beyond the Basics) [http://www.uptodate.com/contents/acute-pancreatitis-beyond-the-basics?view=print] (UpToDate)
- Chronic Pancreatitis (Beyond the Basics) [http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chronic-pancreatitis-beyond-the-basics?view=print] (UpToDate)

Genetics

- Hereditary Pancreatitis [http://pancreasfoundation.org/hereditary-pancreatitis/] (National Pancreas Foundation) - PDF

Images

- Pancreatitis - slideshow [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/presentations/100149_1.htm]
  Available in Spanish [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100149_1.htm]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Pancreatitis [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Pancreatitis%22] (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Pancreatitis, Acute Necrotizing [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Pancreatitis,+Acute+Necrotizing%22] (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Pancreatitis, Chronic [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Pancreatitis,+Chronic%22] (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)


Reference Desk

  Available in Spanish [http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/Pages/default.aspx]

Find an Expert


Children


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**Women**


**Patient Handouts**

- Abdominal tap [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003896.htm]


- Chronic pancreatitis [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000221.htm]

- ERCP [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007479.htm]


- Pancreatitis - discharge [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000201.htm]

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**MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA**

- Abdominal CT scan [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003789.htm]

- Abdominal MRI [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003796.htm]

- Abdominal tap [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003896.htm]

- Abdominal ultrasound [https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003777.htm]


