

**Peptic Ulcers: It's Not Just Stress Anymore**  
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For several years it was believed that gastric ulcers were caused by stress. Although prolonged stress can increase acid production in the stomach, this increase in and of itself does not cause gastric ulcers. More recently, research has shown the 90% of a ulcers in the small bowel (duodenal ulcers) and 70% of all gastric ulcers have been attributed to *H. pylori*.

*Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a bacteria that breaks down the normally protective lining of the stomach making it more vulnerable to the acidic contents. Other risk factors may include: nicotine (tobacco products), steroids, aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents(NSAIDS), caffeine, and alcohol.

With the advent of over the counter stomach remedies, such as Tagamet, Pepcid AC, and Zantac, many people are treating themselves for gastric discomfort, rather than following up with their primary care physician. Other symptoms can include, excess gas (belching), decreased appetite or tolerance for food, and/or nausea/vomiting. If you have been taking histamine blockers like Tagamet, Pepcid, or Zantac or proton pump inhibitors like Prilosec or Prevacid for a more than 6 months, a test for *H. Pylori* may be indicated.

Since you now know that peptic ulcers are more commonly related to *H. pylori* than stress or other factors, call and make an appointment with your primary care physician (PCP) today.