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7 Natural Ways to Fight Ulcers

7 NATURAL WAYS TO FIGHT ULCERS

by

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RESEARCH

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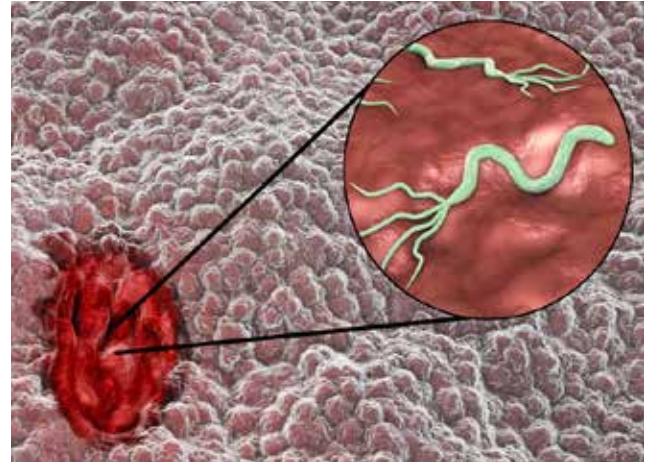
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INTRODUCTION

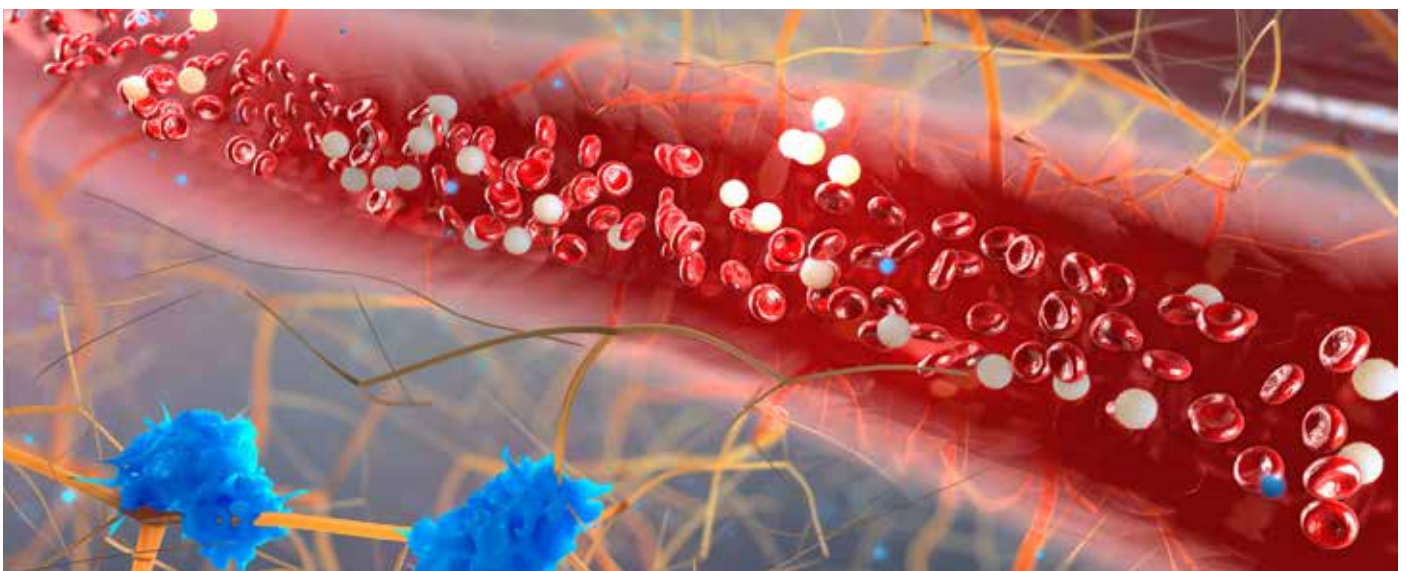
“An ulcer is the hitch stripe of the American businessman.” This was a common refrain during the 1950s and 60s. These two decades post-World War II saw the expansion of the American business model around the world and dramatically changed every aspect of social society. —And most especially a dramatic increase in stress. This was surely a big part of the reason that commuting, the three-martini lunch, and a frantic schedule got the blame for causing ulcers.



Today, after 60 years and lots of medical advances later, we know that—while peptic ulcers may be exacerbated by stress and a poor diet—the **main culprit in causing them is actually a bacteria: *Helicobacter pylori*, or more commonly just *H. pylori***. About 30-40% of Americans are infected with this bug. For some of us, the result of this bacteria is a peptic ulcer.

Currently, no vaccine prevents an *H. pylori* infection, which can result from unclean food or water or coming into contact with saliva from another person who is infected with the bacterium. If you aren't infected with *H. pylori*, the best way to prevent it is to wash your hands before you eat, to make sure you drink clean water and your food is properly prepared..

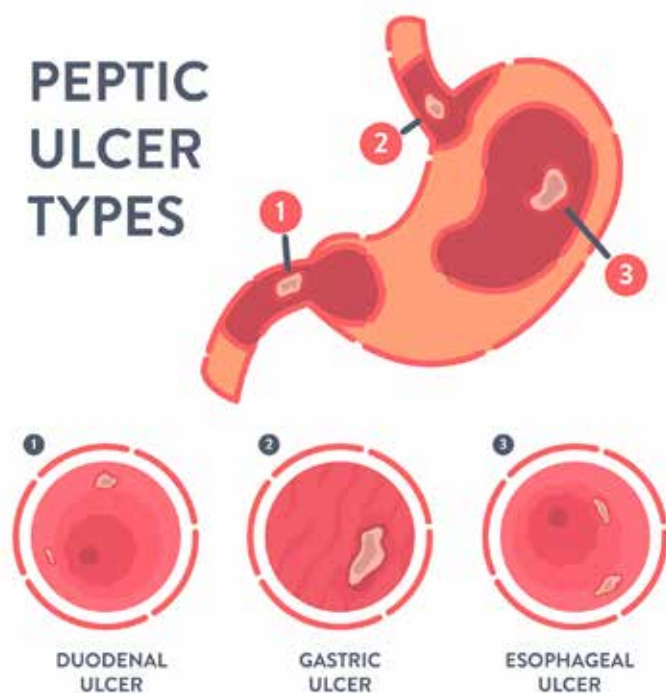
What about those who have ulcers? The standard medical treatment is a round of antibiotics and antacids. In this book, however, we're going to look at some alternatives. First, we'll discuss the different kinds of digestive ulcers we might face. Then we'll discuss **seven natural ways to overcome the symptoms of ulcers and get rid of them once and for all**.



Three Different Kinds of Ulcers

There are no pleasant or good digestive ulcers. There are three primary types of ulcers that develop in the upper portion of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Their names indicate where in your GI tract they occur.

- **Esophageal ulcer:** this occurs in the long tube that descends from the mouth and throat, past the larynx to the opening of the stomach.
- **Gastric ulcer:** this is a peptic ulcer that is found in the stomach itself.
- **Duodenal ulcer:** an ulcer that develops in the upper part of the small intestine just below of the actual stomach.



While they develop in different parts of the GI tract, each of these is essentially a type of peptic ulcer, and, for each, the culprit is essentially the same: *H. pylori*. The symptoms are similar, as well:

- Stomach pain/heartburn
- Nausea
- Bloating
- Belching
- Vomiting
- Weight loss/loss of appetite
- Black or bloody stool

In that other conditions can cause similar symptoms, it's important to know when you have symptoms like these whether or not they are the result of a digestive ulcer. Medical providers have several means of determining whether or not a peptic ulcer is present, with varying degrees of intrusiveness. These include a barium swallow test, an endoscopy, a blood antibody test, a stool culture, or a urea breath test.

It's also important to know that, when left untreated, ulcers can result in bleeding, perforation of the stomach or intestinal lining, or scarring that could lead to an intestinal obstruction.

#1

Give Them Up to Get Better

Before we discuss proactive things we can do to improve symptoms and cure ulcers, let's talk about some practices and substances you can omit from your lifestyle that will help with your symptoms and prevent them from getting worse. First, the good news: **you don't have to give up your favorite spicy foods to prevent ulcers.**

Patrick I. Okolo, III, MD, MPH, chief of endoscopy at Johns Hopkins Hospital and assistant professor of gastroenterology and hepatology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, says, *"There is no science that supports the admonition to eat bland food. While it is true that certain foods may make someone more symptomatic because they irritate the stomach more, there is no truth that [any food] makes something heal less or faster if you eat it."*¹

The bottom line is, while you are suffering from a peptic ulcer, some foods and drinks may irritate your GI tract. Of themselves, they aren't making your condition worse, however. **When you have recovered from the ulcer, there is no reason to avoid anything you enjoy eating or drinking (at least not on account of a gastric ulcer).**



There are some things you will be well-served to avoid. At the top of the list are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These are common painkillers that fight inflammation: aspirin, naproxen, ibuprofen, and similar drugs. **These not only worsen GI tract pain and damage, but they can also actually cause ulcers.**



Tobacco is another product to be avoided if you are prone to gastric ulcers. **Tobacco increases the likelihood of developing peptic ulcers and also prevents them from healing once they occur.**



Finally, research suggests that **cutting alcohol out of your diet and reducing the amount of stress you are experiencing is beneficial.** Abstaining from these two items is a preventive for ulcers as well as accelerates the healing process.

#2

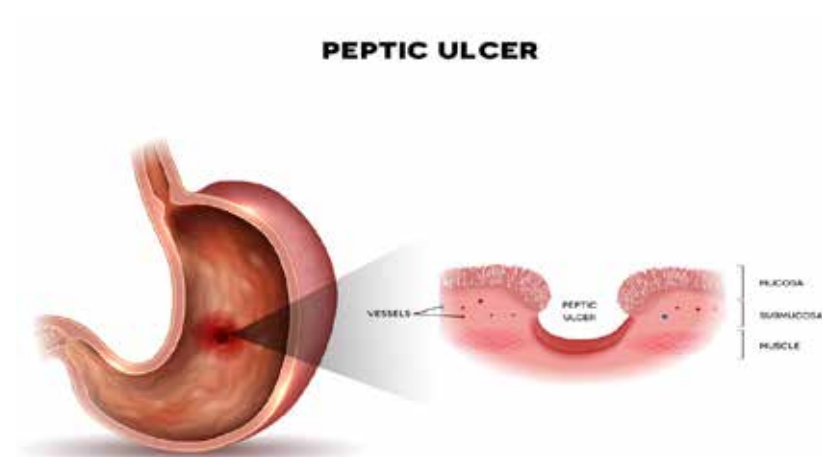
Licorice

No fooling—licorice is a tremendous help to those suffering from peptic ulcers. Okay, it's time for the other shoe to fall. We're not talking about the candy store version of licorice. What we're discussing is deglycyrrhizinated licorice, which is actually **organic sugar-free licorice root extract**.



This can be purchased in multiple places and forms as a supplement. The maximum recommended dosage is two ounces a day, limited to a maximum of two weeks. Beyond the recommended dosage and treatment period, **licorice extract has been shown to increase blood pressure and worsen cardiac issues.**

How does licorice help ulcers? Organic licorice extract apparently has natural antibiotic qualities that control the growth of *H. pylori*. It has the extra benefit of being a good substitute for bismuth (Pepto Bismol).



The National Institute of Health (NIH) reported a 2013 double-blind study in which licorice extract was substituted for bismuth as part of treatment for peptic ulcers. Not only was the licorice superior as a substitute for ulcer discomfort, but there was some evidence that it worked to prevent the growth of *H. pylori* and thus promote healing.

The study authors went so far as to suggest that licorice by itself could be considered a treatment when the four antibiotics they tested were not readily available. They also said the licorice was cheaper than the antibiotics.

In other studies reported in the alternative medicine blog of Saint Luke's Hospital of Chesterfield, Missouri, deglycyrrhizinated licorice was found to **cure ulcers in animals as well as improve or cure ulcers in 90% of studied peptic ulcer patients**. Organic licorice root extract has also been used to treat canker sores, GERD, and eczema successfully.



#3

Whole Grains, Vegetables, and Fruit

At the risk of getting totally healthy, you can go a long way toward treating and preventing ulcers by going to a **diet of whole grains, vegetables, and fruit**. The Mayo clinic is reported to have stated that a vitamin-rich diet is a curative for ulcers.

WHAT SORT OF HEALTHY FOOD SHOULD YOU CONSUME?



WHOLE GRAINS



BERRIES



BLACK OLIVES



DARK CHOCOLATE



MEXICAN OREGANO



FLAXSEED



DRIED ROSEMARY

In particular, milled whole grains—rice, wheat, and maize—have a good effect on peptic ulcers. Once again, this has been discussed thoroughly in an NIH article listing the health benefits of whole grains and focusing in particular on gastric ulcers:

*"The effect of fiber on peptic ulcer disease was attributed to its buffering effect on acid secretion. There seemed to be a relationship between the fiber content of staple diet and the geographical commonness of duodenal ulceration. The frequency was lower in populations using unrefined wheat, millets or maize with a high fiber content and higher in populations using refined wheat or maize flour or milled rice with low fiber content. . . . Experiments on animal peptic ulcer models showed that the lipids present in the unrefined staple foods in areas with low prevalence of duodenal ulcer had a gastroprotective effect against ulceration and also promoted ulcer healing. These were not present in the refined staple foods of the areas with high duodenal ulcer prevalence."*²

In other words, whole grains act as a buffer against digestive acid within the GI tract, particularly in the upper small intestine. It also promotes healing when ulcers are present.

#4

Flavonoids

There is obviously an overlap between some flavonoids and a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Specifically, however, **flavonoids are chemical compounds found in abundance in colorful fruits and vegetables**—in fact, flavonoid compounds create many of those amazing, brilliant colors. While there are about 5,000 different compounds of flavonoids, there are six main groupings. **Among the health benefits of flavonoids is their antioxidant propensity. They restore the health of our bodies at the cellular level.**

When it comes to our GI tract, flavonoids have what is called “gastroprotective activity.” This means they work to prevent harmful secretions of digestive substances, they are “cytoprotective” (they prevent damage to stomach and intestine lining), and **promote cellular healing in the gut.**

THERE ARE A GREAT MANY FLAVONOIDS. SOME OF THE MAIN SOURCES OF FLAVONOIDS WE MIGHT USE INCLUDE:



APPLES



LEGUMES



BROCCOLI



KALE



SOYBEANS

While partaking of flavonoids as a part of our diet is by far the tastiest, freshest manner of using them, it is also possible to find them easily in the form of supplements. The use of flavonoids is not only extremely beneficial, but there are few health risks or side effects that come with their use. Some issues with blood clotting have been reported in cases where flavonoids are consumed in high amounts. It's also been reported, however, that people who have a diet high in flavonoids have a lower incidence of cancer in general. It stands to reason that, with 5,000 different powerful compounds, some side-effects—both positive and negative—are possible.

#5

Honey

Honey is an astonishing natural product. It does not spoil. It can be **used to heal burns, salve wounds, and as a natural lubricant**. It's far better for people with diabetes than refined sugar. **It lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol, lower triglycerides, and is loaded with antioxidants. It is nutritious and attractive and tastes really good.**

By the way, studies have demonstrated that honey is an antimicrobial and, in particular, combats *H. pylori*. Indeed, the NIH has published an article about the medicinal qualities of honey, especially a variety called "manuka honey." Among manuka honey's benefits, they write:



"The healing property of honey is due to the fact that it offers antibacterial activity, maintains a moist wound condition, and its high viscosity helps to provide a protective barrier to prevent infection. Its immunomodulatory property is relevant to wound repair too. The antimicrobial activity in most honeys is due to the enzymatic production of hydrogen peroxide. However, another kind of honey, called non-peroxide honey (viz., manuka honey), displays significant antibacterial effects even when the hydrogen peroxide activity is blocked."³

Honey naturally produces hydrogen peroxide, which explains why it doesn't spoil and how it manages to destroy microbes. Beyond this, at least one variety—manuka honey—turns out to be a **natural antibiotic**.

Manuka honey is a product of bees that pollinate the manuka tree, which is native to New Zealand and Australia. It was first introduced to the world by the Maoris. The honey, however, is not expensive and can be found online and in discount stores. The natural antimicrobial compound in manuka honey is called methylglyoxal (MG). This compound is found highly concentrated in the blossoms of the manuka tree.



#6

Garlic

In addition to warding off vampires and unwanted suitors, **garlic has also been demonstrated to be an effective way to fight *H. pylori*.** The same study that focused on the results of garlic in fighting *H. pylori* also investigated the use of licorice and red ginseng against the infection. It was stated:

*"Garlic contains at least 33 sulfur compounds such as allicin, alliin, ajoene, diallyl trisulfide (DATS), and others. The sulfur compounds are responsible for many of its medicinal effects. . . water-soluble sulfur compounds, e.g., S-allylcysteine (SAC) and S-allyl mercaptocysteine, have all been shown to exhibit antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-inflammation activity. Recently, several studies reported that sulfur compounds have effects to inhibit *H. pylori* colonization, decrease gastric inflammation and oxidative stress by *H. pylori* infection, and lead to gastric ulcer healing."*⁴



Thus, research demonstrates that **garlic both inhibits the inflammation resulting from the *H. pylori* infection and prevents the bacterium from multiplying.** This wide-ranging study tested rodents who were infected with the illness and then subsequently cured through the use of garlic.

Garlic is an extremely potent compound, not merely in a culinary sense but also when used medicinally, as it has been for centuries. For this reason, it's important to pay close attention to how to use garlic in treating ulcers, how much to use, and what side-effects may occur. Two cloves of garlic taken with meals twice daily have been demonstrated to be effective against ulcers. When it comes to side-effects, the main caution about garlic is that it can thin the blood, which is particularly dangerous for those who are already on blood thinners. **It also drops blood sugar** and, thus, should be used with caution by people taking diabetes medication.



#7

Mastic

Mastic is probably the least known of all the natural treatments for ulcers. **Mastic is a resin—a form of sap—that is produced by the mastic tree that is native to Greece.** While this resin is used for a number of purposes, it has been valued throughout recorded history for its medicinal powers. Indeed, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, recorded using mastic as a treatment for digestive problems.

For the treatment of gastric ulcers, mastic comes in a powder form, which is taken for two weeks. Research into the use of mastic for ulcers is on-going, though some studies indicate that taking mastic powder for four weeks does improve outcomes for ulcer sufferers.

For medicine that has been used for at least 3000 years, mastic seems not to have been thoroughly researched. However, **there is anecdotal evidence that it is helpful for a number of other uses and conditions as well, including:**

- Bad breath/gum infections
- Circulatory problems
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Insect repellent
- Wound dressing



So how does it work? Some earlier studies have shown that mastic is resistant not only to *H. pylori* but a half dozen other trouble-making digestive bacteria. It seems to have properties similar to those of flavonoids. Research into the use of mastic in chewing gum form has been strongly suggested.

In addition to being available in powder form and as chewing gum, mastic as a supplement also comes in tinctures and capsules. For those with skin conditions, mastic is also found as an essential oil.



SUMMARY

A trip to a traditional physician with complaints of a chronic burning sensation, loss of appetite, sulfurous belching, and on-going heartburn will likely result in a series of tests that may culminate in the diagnosis of a peptic ulcer. If you have one of the more invasive exams, you'll likely know whether the ulcer is esophageal, gastric, or duodenal—which is really a geographic diagnosis of where your peptic ulcer is located. Regardless of where it is, your ulcer is a symptom of being infected with the bacterium *H. pylori*. Chances are that the doctor will prescribe antibiotics and antacids.



It's worth noting, however, that there are a variety of natural means to fight *H. pylori* and recover completely from a peptic ulcer. As far as pain relief goes, organic licorice extract has been shown to provide relief comparable to bismuth. Consuming whole grains—rice, maize, and wheat—protects the gut from excess painful digestive juices. There are a number of natural compounds that inhibit or actually attack the *H. pylori* bacteria: honey, flavonoids, garlic, and mastic. The bottom line is that, unless your ulcer is bleeding or has progressed to the point that surgery is a medical necessity, you have a good chance of fighting it naturally.

Once you have recovered from the effects of a gastric ulcer, it's worth remembering that there is no vaccination to prevent reinfection with *H. pylori*. Therefore, the best preventative is to drink clean water and prepare food with clean hands. Avoiding tobacco will also make reinfection less likely. As far as what you eat, spicy food does not cause or worsen your ulcer—although it may make you want to avoid certain foods while you're recovering.

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WHY CHOOSE PUREHEALTH RESEARCH?

These modern times bombard you with stress and surround you with toxins. And that takes a toll on your body over time. These show up as aging skin, aches and pains, out-of-control inflammation, and disease. Your body needs hundreds of micronutrients to conduct thousands of metabolic reactions every single day. Diet, toxic load, medications, and poor absorption are just a few reasons why your body may not be receiving these building blocks of genuine healing.

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