

Acute Pancreatitis

OVERVIEW

Responsible for the production of hormones and the important role it plays in digestion, your pancreas plays an integral role in your body's digestive system.

Damage to your pancreas can lead to inflammation and swelling, a medical condition that's known as pancreatitis. Pancreatitis can be of two main types:

- **Acute Pancreatitis**
Sudden inflammation or swelling of your pancreas due to conditions such as gallstones, alcohol consumption, trauma, medications, or even after abdominal surgery.
- **Chronic Pancreatitis**
This condition results in long-lasting inflammation and scarring of the pancreas and can occur after multiple episodes of acute pancreatitis or in patients who drink excessively.



What are the Symptoms of Acute Pancreatitis?

A sudden onset of swelling or inflammation to your pancreas is termed as acute pancreatitis. If left untreated, it can lead to permanent tissue damage, bleeding, infection, and the development of cysts.

For some patients, acute pancreatitis doesn't just affect your pancreas. Acute pancreatitis can also cause damage to other organs in the body, such as the kidneys and lungs.

Symptoms of acute pancreatitis may worsen after consuming food or drinking. The most common symptoms are abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting. Other symptoms may include:

- Elevated heart rate
- Swollen abdomen
- Change in color to your stool
- Bloating
- Jaundice (yellow skin)
- Shortness of breath
- Fever

How is Acute Pancreatitis Diagnosed?

A board-certified gastroenterologist can help in accurately diagnosing and developing a treatment plan for you if you have symptoms of acute pancreatitis.

In addition to evaluating your symptoms and carrying out a physical examination, your doctor may also recommend several tests be conducted to determine your condition. This can include:

- Complete blood count to check the level of white blood cells in your body
- Basic metabolic panel to evaluate kidney function and electrolytes
- Liver enzymes
- Pancreatic enzymes (amylase and lipase)
- CT scan of your pancreas to look for evidence of inflammation
- Ultrasound to look for gallstones

Treatment for Acute Pancreatitis is Safe When Performed by a Board-Certified Gastroenterologist

Since pain is one of the major symptoms of patients with acute pancreatitis, pain medication is one of the first to be prescribed. Your doctor may also give you medication to control nausea and vomiting.

Depending on how long you have been experiencing your symptoms, you may also be given IV fluids to keep you hydrated.

A course of antibiotics during your treatment for acute pancreatitis may also be prescribed for patients experiencing an infection in the pancreas or surrounding tissue.

For more severe cases, you may require:

- Gallbladder removal surgery if gallstones are the reason for your pancreatitis
- Removal of gallstones with endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) if they're causing a blockage
- Drainage of fluid collections in the pancreas