

Infectious Diseases

Series

1



# ULCERS



# ULCERS

Twenty-five million Americans suffer from an ulcer and 1 in 10 will develop an ulcer at some point in their lives. An ulcer is a sore or hole in the lining of the stomach or duodenum (the first part of the small intestine). Anyone can get an ulcer—men, women, and children too! The most common symptom of an ulcer is a gnawing or burning pain in the part of the stomach between the breastbone and belly button. *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a bacterium that lives on the lining of the stomach. Although we used to think that spicy food, acid, and stress were the major causes of ulcers, we now know that most ulcers are caused by *H. pylori*. Some medicines that reduce the acid in your stomach may make you feel better, but they will not cure the ulcer. Here is the good news: since most ulcers are caused by this bacterial infection called *H. pylori*, they can be cured for good with the right antibiotics in about 1-2 weeks.