

# Pancreatitis

Information for the public

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## Pancreatitis: the care you should expect

Acute pancreatitis is a sudden and painful condition that happens when the pancreas becomes inflamed. Although many people recover quickly, about 1 in 4 develop serious complications that can include blood infection and organ failure. Pancreatitis is most commonly caused by gallstones or alcohol, so getting treatment and support for these underlying causes is important. If the inflammation does not get better over time, it can lead to permanent damage to the pancreas, called 'chronic' pancreatitis. This is most often caused by regular heavy drinking over many years but there can be other reasons too. Chronic pancreatitis is a long-term condition that has a major impact on people's quality of life.

Care for people with pancreatitis and the way it is provided varies in different areas. We want this guideline to make a difference to people with pancreatitis by making sure:

- doctors know which treatments and tests work best so that everyone with pancreatitis gets the right care no matter where they live
- people with pancreatitis get specialist care when they need it
- people and their families are given good information and support to understand pancreatitis so that they can make choices about treatments and lifestyle changes to improve their health
- care teams explain to people with chronic pancreatitis the importance of ongoing support and regular check-ups to help them stay as well as they can.

## Making decisions together

Decisions about care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professional should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should also:

- make sure you understand treatment for pancreatitis, including why at times it can be safer to delay than treat straightaway
- explain that recovery after severe pancreatitis can be slow and it is common to feel worse at times – you should be told who to contact if you feel seriously unwell
- offer advice and support for lifestyle changes like stopping drinking or smoking or eating a healthy diet
- tell you where to get more information and support, including from local and national support groups.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

NHS Choices has more information about [acute pancreatitis](#) and [chronic pancreatitis](#).

The organisation below can give you more advice and support.

- [Guts UK](#), 020 7486 0341

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by pancreatitis and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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