

Pancreatitis And Its Ayurvedic Treatment

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Introduction

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas, an organ that produces several enzymes to aid in the digestion of food, as well as the hormone insulin, which controls the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood. The pancreas is located in the upper abdomen, behind the stomach. When the pancreas is inflamed, the body is not able to absorb all the nutrients it needs.

Pancreatitis may be either acute (sudden and severe) or chronic. Both types of pancreatitis can cause bleeding and tissue death in or around the pancreas. Mild attacks of acute pancreatitis can get better on their own, or with dietary changes. In the case of recurring pancreatitis, however, long-term damage to the pancreas is common, sometimes leading to malnutrition and diabetes.

Necrotizing pancreatitis (in which pancreatic tissue dies) can lead to cyst like pockets and abscesses. Because of the location of the pancreas, inflammation spreads easily. In severe cases, fluid-containing toxins and enzymes leaks from the pancreas through the abdomen. This can damage blood vessels and lead to internal bleeding, which may be life threatening.

Causes:

There are several possible causes of pancreatitis. The most common are gallstones, which block the duct of the pancreas (for acute pancreatitis), and excessive alcohol consumption (for chronic pancreatitis).

- Certain drugs, including azathioprine, sulfonamides, corticosteroids, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and antibiotics such as tetracycline

- Infection with mumps, hepatitis virus, rubella, Epstein-Barr virus (the cause of mononucleosis), and cytomegalovirus
- Abnormalities in the structure of the pancreas or the pancreatic or bile ducts, including pancreatic cancer
- High levels of triglycerides (fats) in the blood
- Surgery to the abdomen, heart, or lungs that temporarily cuts off blood supply to the pancreas, damaging tissue
- Hereditary diseases, such as cystic fibrosis
- Injury to the abdomen

Signs and Symptoms

Common signs and symptoms of pancreatitis include the following:

- Mild to severe, ongoing, sharp pain in the upper abdomen that may radiate to back or chest
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Sweating
- Abdominal tenderness
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Oily stools (chronic pancreatitis)
- Weight loss

Who's Most At Risk?

People with these conditions or characteristics have a higher risk for pancreatitis:

- Biliary tract disease
- Binge alcohol use and chronic alcoholism
- Recent surgery
- Family history of high triglycerides
- Age (most common ages 35 - 64)
- Smokers

African Americans are at higher risk than Caucasians and Native Americans.

Treatment Options

Treatment Plan

Acute pancreatitis may require hospitalization, where medication for pain is given. One can also fast, to allow the pancreas to rest and stabilize. You will receive intravenous fluids and nutrition (parenteral nutrition). If you have gallstones, your doctor may recommend surgery or other procedures to remove them.

People with chronic pancreatitis may require treatment for alcohol addiction, if that is the cause. Treatment also includes pain management, enzyme supplements, and dietary changes. Treatment for patients who have pancreatitis due to high triglyceride levels includes weight loss, exercise, eating a low-fat diet, controlling blood sugar (if you have diabetes), and avoiding alcohol and medications that can raise triglycerides, such as thiazide diuretics and beta-blockers.

Drug Therapies

Painkillers, Antibiotics, Enzyme supplements, such as pancrelipase (Lipram, Pancrease, Viokase), to help the body absorb food better. In some cases steroids to treat autoimmune pancreatitis.

Surgical and Other Procedures

Different types of surgical procedures may be necessary, depending on the cause of the pancreatitis. People who have pancreatic necrosis (tissue death), almost always require surgery to remove damaged and infected tissue. Surgery may also be required to drain an abscess.

For chronic pancreatitis with pain that won't respond to treatment, a section of the pancreas may need to be removed.

If the pancreatitis is a result of gallstones, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) may be necessary.

Nutrition and Supplements

- Drink 6 - 8 glasses of filtered water daily.
- Exercise moderately for 30 minutes daily, 5 days a week.
- A multivitamin daily, containing the antioxidant vitamins A, C, E, D, the B-complex vitamins, and trace minerals such as magnesium, calcium, zinc, and selenium.
- Omega-3 fatty acids,

Prognosis/Possible Complications

Possible complications of pancreatitis include:

- Infection of the pancreas
- Cyst like pockets that can become infected, bleed, or rupture
- The failure of several organs (heart, kidney, lungs) and shock due to toxins in the blood
- Type II diabetes

In mild cases of pancreatitis, where only the pancreas is inflamed, the prognosis is excellent. In chronic pancreatitis, recurring attacks tend to become more severe. Overall, 10-year survival approximates 70%, and 20-year survival is about 45%. Death is not usually due to pancreatitis itself, but rather to malignancy, postoperative complications, and complications of alcohol or tobacco.

Ayurvedic treatment:

Ayurvedic treatment may be started once the acute condition has stabilized, in order to prevent a recurrence, and to prevent or reduce permanent damage to the pancreas. Medicines like Amalaki (*Embllica officinalis*), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*), Behada (*Terminalia bellerica*) and Yashtimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) form the main stay of treatment for this condition.

Other medicines which can be used effectively are: Sutshekhar-Ras, Praval-Panchamrut-Ras, Bhunimbadi-Qadha, Shankh-Bhasma, Shankh-Vati, Praval-Bhasma and Kamdudha-Ras.

Medicines like Arogya-Vardhini, Punarnavadi-Qadha, Rohitakarishtha, Tamra-Bhasma, Medohar-Guggulu, Trikatu (Three pungent herbs), Maha-Shankh-Vati, Swarjika-Kshar, Chitrak (*Plumbago zeylanica*), Kutki (*Picrorrhiza kurroa*), Rohitak (*Tecoma undulata*) and Sharpunkha (*Tephrosia purpurea*) are used to treat impacted gall stones, which can result in pancreatitis.

Medicines like Maha-Manjishthadi-Qadha, Saarivadi-Churna, Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*), Saariva (*Hemidesmus indicus*), Patol (*Tricosanthe dioica*), Patha (*Cissampelos pareira*), Musta (*Cyperus rotundus*) and Kutaj (*Holarrhina antidysenterica*) can be used to heal the pancreas and prevent permanent damage to the gland.

Medicines like Sukshma-Triphala, Triphala-Guggulu, Laxadi-Guggulu and Punarnavadi-Guggulu can be used to prevent bleeding in the pancreas and

the surrounding areas, and possible infection in the peritoneal cavity.

Because of the serious nature of this condition, prevention is highly desirable, and people at risk should be advised to avoid alcohol in binge amounts and to discontinue risk factors like fatty meals

Prevention of Pancreatitis:

The following may help reduce your risk of pancreatitis:

- maintaining a healthy weight
- limiting your alcohol consumption
- following a balanced diet
- getting regular exercise

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