

# PANCREATITIS

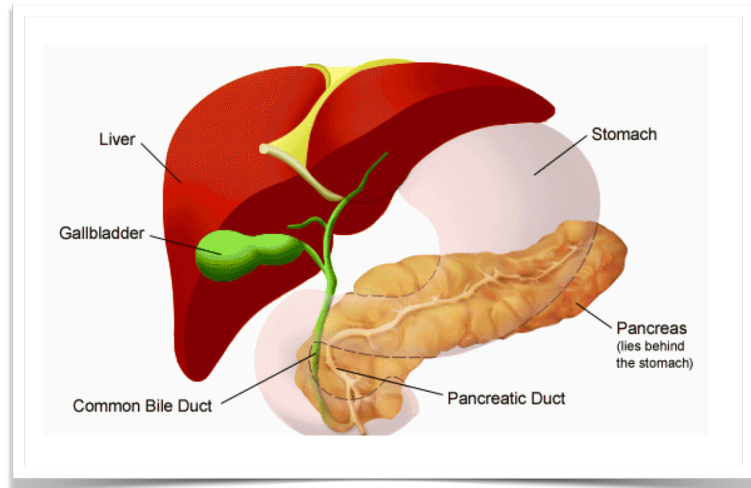
*Pancreas, the gland that secretes digestive juices*

## Basics

- The pancreas is a gland located behind the stomach. It is responsible for insulin production and secretion of enzymes that help with digestion of food
- Pancreatitis is an inflammation of the pancreas in which pancreatic enzymes auto-digest the gland
- Acute: healing without any impairment of function.
- Chronic: recurrent damage to the pancreas with irreversible destruction

## Symptoms

- Acute: dull, boring, steady abdominal pain, sudden in onset, located in the upper abdomen, may radiate directly through to the back. Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Chronic: severe, steady pain in the mid- or left upper abdomen radiating to the back



## Prevention strategies

- Avoid heavy alcohol use, chronic or irregular. Pancreatitis may develop from an isolated episode of binge drinking or habitual alcohol use, but the risk of alcoholic acute and chronic pancreatitis increases with increasing intake of alcohol. Alcohol may also sensitize the pancreas to other factors which interact to increase alcohol toxicity, such as tobacco smoking or diet.
- Maintain optimal weight as obesity is a risk factor for gallstones which can cause pancreatitis. Certain metabolic disorders, such as insulin resistance, can enhance the formation of gallstones.
- Other triggers for pancreatitis include very high triglyceride levels, medications (e.g., sulfa antibiotics, furosemide, corticosteroids), or toxins (e.g., exposure to insecticides, scorpions or snake bites).