



# EL SURGEONS

## SPECIALIST SURGEONS

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### NEIL COMLEY

MB ChB (UOFS) FCS (SA)

### SHERIDAN SANTHIA

MB ChB (Stell) FCS (SA) MMed (Stell)

### JUAN GOUWS

MB ChB(UFS) DA(SA) MSc(Edin) FCS(SA) MMed(UCT)

### LANGA NQWENA

MB ChB (UCT) MRCS (IRE) FCS (SA)

### PIERRE MOUTON

MB ChB(Stell) FCS (SA) MMed (Stell)

17 St Lukes Road, East London 5201

Email: [surgeons@elsurgeons.co.za](mailto:surgeons@elsurgeons.co.za)

Phone: (043) 743 4567/Fax No: (043) 722 6757

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## ULCER

### COMMON SIGNS OF AN ULCER

Burning, cramping or hunger-pain in the stomach area, often one to three hours after a meal or in the middle of the night

Pain that goes away or gets worse with eating

Nausea and vomiting

Black, tarry or bloody stools

Sometimes ulcers cause no pain or other symptoms at all until they begin to bleed.

### WHEN YOU HAVE AN ULCER

An ulcer is a small sore or crater in the wall of the upper digestive tract. Ulcers are caused by an imbalance between the strong acids that your body makes to digest your food and the substance that protects your body's tissue from these acids.

### HOW ULCERS FORM:

#### **A Healthy balance**

To digest the food you eat, your stomach produces an acid and enzyme called pepsin.

#### **An imbalance causes ulcers**

When there's too much acid or too little mucous, the healthy balance is upset. Acid and pepsin meet the underlying tissue, damaging it and creating an ulcer. There are two main types of ulcers – Duodenal ulcers, which can occur in the duodenum which is the space where the stomach meets the small intestine) and Gastric ulcers which occur in the stomach itself.

## **YOUR ROLE IN HEALING THE ULCER**

### **HELP THE HEALING PROCESS**

Stop smoking as it upsets the healthy balance in the digestive tract. It irritates the lining of the stomach and duodenum, making ulcers heal more slowly and ulcer complications more likely. In people who smoke, the ulcers are also more likely to return.

### **Take your medication**

Your medication is essential to help restore the balance between the acid and mucous in your digestive tract. Take all your medication until you are told to stop, even if you have no symptoms.

### **Manage your symptoms**

#### **Reduce your stress**

Whenever you can, cut down on the stress in your life. Talk to your doctor about starting a moderate exercise program. Take short rest breaks during the day and get plenty of sleep.

### **Eat a healthy diet**

Choose a variety of foods that make up a healthy/balanced diet but avoid any food that makes you uncomfortable. Alcohol, caffeine and decaffeinated coffee may make healing of the ulcer more difficult, so it is best to avoid them.

### **After you are healed**

Your doctor will tell you when your ulcer has completely healed. Once you have had an ulcer, you may be more likely to develop another one in the future so you may continue to take small doses of medication every day. Follow your doctor's instructions closely. Including make the lifestyle changes that your doctor recommends.