Acute Pancreatitis Causes

Acute pancreatitis has numerous etiologies. It occurs when pancreatic enzymes (especially trypsin) that digest food are activated in the pancreas instead of the small intestine. It may be acute—beginning suddenly and lasting a few days. The mnemonic GET SMASHHED is useful in recalling the most common causes: Gallstones, Ethanol, Trauma, Steroids, Mumps, Autoimmune disease, Scorpion sting, Hypercalcemia, Hyperlipidemia, ERCP and Drugs.



PLAY PICMONIC

"GET SMASHHED" Mnemonic
"GET SMASHED" Bar
The mnemonic, "GET SMASHHED," is very helpful in recalling the most common causes of acute pancreatitis. It represents Gallstones, Ethanol, Trauma, Steroids, Mumps, Autoimmune disease, Scorpion sting, Hypercalcemia, Hypertriglyceridemia, ERCP and Drugs.

Gallstones
Gold-stones
Gallstones are the most common cause of acute pancreatitis. When gallstones become trapped in the biliary tree, pancreatitis develops due to obstruction of flow.

(Ethanol) Alcohol
Alcoholic-martini
Ingestion of large amounts of alcohol can lead to acute pancreatitis. Alcohol abuse is also the most common cause of chronic pancreatitis.

Trauma
Trauma-spike
Though the pancreas is one of the least injured organs in abdominal trauma, acute pancreatitis can occur from minimal trauma. Examples include blunt force, motor vehicle accident and penetrative injury.

Steroids
Steroid-stairs
Corticosteroids, such as prednisolone, are known to induce pancreatitis.

Mumps
Mummy-humps
Mumps, a virus typically experienced in childhood if unvaccinated, can lead to self-limited acute pancreatitis.

Autoimmune
Auto-in-moon
Autoimmune pancreatitis is a common presentation of acute pancreatitis. It can be particularly challenging to diagnose because the way it presents itself closely resembles pancreatic cancer.

Scorpion Sting
Scorpion Sting
Scorpion stings can lead to a transient, self-limiting acute pancreatitis.

Hypercalcemia
Hiker-calcium-cow
Pancreatitis can develop through translation of inactive trypsinogens to active ones by hypercalcemia. Though not particularly understood, hypercalcemia can occur from hyperparathyroidism, which is also linked to acute pancreatitis.

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Hypertriglyceridemia > 1000

Hiker-TAG-triceratop with Greater Than 1000

Hypertriglyceridemia is the 3rd most common cause of acute pancreatitis (after gallstones and alcohol). A serum triglyceride level > 1000 is an identifiable risk factor for acute pancreatitis.

ERCP

EoR-Sees-through-P

ERCP can lead to acute pancreatitis, as it is a procedure which involves cannulation or injection of the pancreatic duct.

Drugs

Med-bottle

Other drugs such as azathioprine and valproic acid are associated with development of acute pancreatitis.

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