

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.

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.