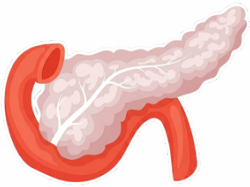
Your guide to...

Understanding the pancreas

1. What is the pancreas?



Meet your pancreas!

Your digestive system breaks down food and liquids into essential building blocks using enzymes and hormones. The pancreas plays a vital role in this process.

Where is it?

Located in the upper abdomen, positioned behind the stomach and directly in front of the spine.

What does it look like?

Salmon pink in colour, about nine inches long and roughly as thick as your wrist at its widest part.

It has two main jobs:

1. Digestion

Produces digestive enzymes that pass into the small intestine to help break down fats, carbohydrates and protein.

2. Hormones

Produces vital hormones, including insulin.



2. What is pancreatitis?

Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas.

Acute pancreatitis

Sudden

- **What happens:**

Sudden inflammation of the pancreas gland, beginning in the cells that produce digestive enzymes.

- **Main causes**

8 in 10 cases are caused by gallstones or drinking too much alcohol.

- **Idiopathic**

In 1 in 10 cases, no clear cause is found (known as idiopathic).

Chronic pancreatitis

Ongoing

- **What happens:**

Ongoing inflammation that turns a healthy, soft pancreas hard and knobbly over time.

- **Main causes**

No single cause. Usually a mix of genetic and environmental factors. 7 in 10 cases linked to drinking too much alcohol.

- **Idiopathic**

In up to 3 in 10 cases, no clear cause is found.

3. Managing pancreatitis and treatment

Acute pancreatitis

Treatment focuses on supportive care in hospital, including fluids, oxygen, alongside tube feeding or surgery for severe cases or gallstone removal.

Prevention:

To prevent future attacks, it is vital to completely stop drinking alcohol and quit smoking as both damage the pancreas.



Chronic pancreatitis

Treatment focuses on long-term symptom control, pain management, enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) to aid digestion and monitoring.

Slowing progression:

It is vital to completely stop drinking alcohol and quit smoking to slow down irreversible tissue damage and further progression.



Pancreatitis key statistics

8 in 10

Acute pancreatitis cases are caused by gallstones or drinking too much alcohol.

7 in 10

Chronic pancreatitis cases are caused by drinking too much alcohol.

1 to 3 in 10

Chronic pancreatitis cases have no identifiable clear cause. This is known as idiopathic.

Learn more and take action

Guts UK is the only UK charity funding a research fellowship into pancreatitis.
Our digestive systems have been underfunded and misunderstood for decades. We're here to change that.

Download resources

Head to gutscharity.org.uk/kranky-panky to download our free, reliable resources and learn more about pancreatitis.

Join us on socials

Search @gutscharityuk on social media to join the #KrankyPanky campaign.

Support our work

Donate today at gutscharity.org.uk/donate to help improve the lives of millions affected by digestive conditions and symptoms like pancreatitis.

Need more information on your digestive condition or symptoms?
Guts UK is the national charity for the digestive system. For information and guidance, go to **gutscharity.org.uk/information.**

Need support? Contact our Helpline on 0300 102 4887 or gutscharity.org.uk/helpline.

Registered charity no. 1137029