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# Discharge Instructions for Acute Pancreatitis

You have been diagnosed with acute pancreatitis. The pancreas is an organ that makes digestive juices and hormones. Your pancreas is inflamed or swollen. Gallstones are a common cause of pancreatitis. These hard stones form in the gallbladder. The gallbladder shares a tube with the pancreas into the small intestine. If gallstones block this tube, fluid can't leave the pancreas. The fluid backs up and causes redness and swelling (inflammation). Alcohol use is another very common cause of pancreatitis. There are other causes. Make sure you understand the cause of your pancreatitis. Then you can try to stop it from happening again.

## Immediate home care

- Find someone to drive you to appointments. Acute pancreatitis is a serious condition, and you should never drive if you have symptoms.
- Stop drinking if your illness was caused by alcohol.
  - Ask your health care provider about alcohol abuse programs and support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous.
  - Ask your provider about prescription medicines that can help you stop drinking.
  - Tell your provider about the alcohol withdrawal symptoms you have when you stop drinking. This is very important. You may need close medical supervision and special medicines when you stop drinking. This will depend on your alcohol withdrawal history.
- Take your medicines exactly as directed. Don't skip doses.
- Eat a low-fat diet. Ask your provider for menus and other diet information.
- Stop smoking. Smoking increases problems if you have pancreatitis.

## Ongoing care

- Tell your provider about any medicines you are taking. Some medicines can cause this condition.
- Before starting any new medicine, ask your provider if it will harm your pancreas. This includes any new over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or herbal supplements.
- Tell your provider if you lose weight without dieting.
- Be aware of symptoms that may mean your pancreatitis has come back. These symptoms include belly pain, nausea and vomiting, and fever.
- Keep all follow-up appointments with your provider. Problems can often show up later.

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- If your pancreatitis was caused by gallstones, gallbladder removal will likely be advised.
  - Stay away from alcohol and smoking. They can lead to recurrent and more severe pancreatitis.

## **Follow-up**

Follow up with your health care provider as advised.

## **When to call your doctor**

Contact your health care provider or get medical care right away if you:

- Have a fever of 100.4° F ( 38°C) or higher, or as advised by your provider.
- Have chills.
- Have severe pain from your upper belly to your back.
- Have nausea and vomiting.
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded.
- Have yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice).
- Have bruises on your belly or back.
- Have belly swelling and tenderness.
- Have a rapid pulse.
- Have shallow, fast breathing.