

## **What is a Bleeding Ulcer?**

According to H. Craig Philpot, M.D., a gastroenterologist with Birmingham Gastroenterology Associates, P.C, “A peptic ulcer is a defect in the lining of your stomach or small intestine. Left untreated, a peptic ulcer can cause internal bleeding. Peptic ulcers can also cause a hole in the wall of your stomach or small intestine. This puts you at risk of serious infection of your abdominal cavity.”

Signs and symptoms of a bleeding ulcer include:

- Black, tarry, loose stools, sometimes with abdominal cramps
- Vomiting blood, which may appear bright red or black like coffee grounds

“Peptic ulcers usually cause pain due to stomach acid washing over the open sore. But when bleeding occurs, it may buffer the acid and decrease the pain,” Dr. Philpot explains. About 10 percent of people with bleeding ulcers don’t have pain. Treatment of a bleeding ulcer depends on the underlying cause. Acid blockers may temporarily relieve pain. If bleeding is severe, treatment may require endoscopy or surgery.