

Title: *Helicobacter pylori* infection: What is it, and should I be tested?

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Date: January 5, 2009

Key words: *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*), peptic ulcer disease, gastritis, gastric cancer

Abstract: *Helicobacter pylori* is a prevalent, chronic worldwide infection. It can cause gastritis, dyspepsia and peptic ulcer disease. It is also a major risk factor in the development of gastric adenocarcinoma and gastric MALT lymphoma. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide patients with information about *H pylori* including some signs and symptoms of infection, indications for testing, types of tests and information regarding treatment strategies.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Helicobacter pylori

What is it, and should I be tested?



HOW IS *H. PYLORI* TREATED?

Patients who have *H. pylori* and also have an ulcer are most likely to benefit from being treated. Patients who only have heartburn or acid reflux are less likely to benefit from treatment.

Treatment usually includes two of the following antibiotics: clarithromycin (Biaxin), amoxicillin, tetracycline, metronidazole (Flagyl)

Also, the doctor will prescribe a stomach acid inhibitor such as omeprazole (Prilosec) and occasionally a stomach lining protector such as bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)

Treatment is typically for 14 days. Once the *H. pylori* bacteria are gone from your body, the chance of being infected again is very low.

For further information on *H. pylori*, go to:

American Academy of
Family Physicians:
<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2002/0401/p1339.html>

UpToDate for Patients:
<http://www.uptodate.com/patients/content/topic.do?topicKey=~gi0iITvAhVEvR5>

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Patient Education Tool

WHAT IS *HELICOBACTER PYLORI* (*H. PYLORI*)

Helicobacter pylori (*H. pylori*) is a bacteria that grows in the stomach. By weakening the protective coating of the stomach, the normal digestive juices used to break down food irritate the stomach's inner lining. This can cause pain, ulcers, stomach inflammation (chronic gastritis) and rarely stomach cancer.

Up to half of the world's population is infected with *H. pylori*, though the rate of infection in the United States is much lower than in developing countries. Crowded, unsanitary living situations have higher rates of infection as well, because the bacteria is thought to be passed from person to person.

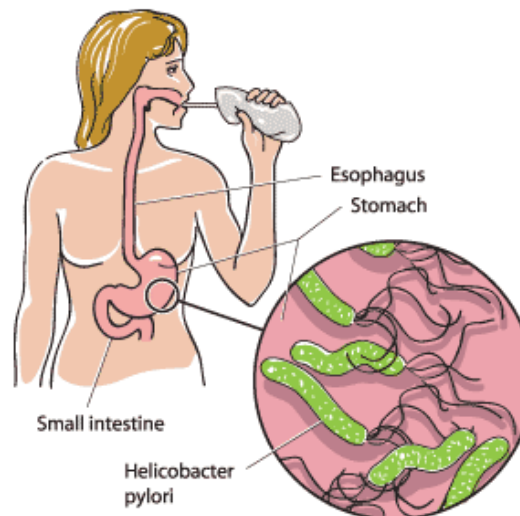
Interestingly, many people have *H. pylori* in their stomach but don't have pain, an ulcer, or gastritis. Coffee drinking, smoking, and drinking alcohol increase your risk for an ulcer from *H. pylori*.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF *H. PYLORI* INFECTION

Most people with *H. pylori* do not have symptoms, and the people who have symptoms often have an ulcer or gastritis. Some symptoms are:

- Abdominal pain which is decreased with eating
- Bloating and fullness
- Feeling very hungry 1 to 3 hours after eating
- Mild nausea (may be relieved by vomiting)



http://www.mediresource.com/HealthNews/images/English/LT2_29.gif

WHO SHOULD BE TESTED?

There is good evidence that shows the following are reasons to be tested for *H. pylori*:

- Current proven stomach or intestinal ulcer
- Patients diagnosed with a certain type of stomach cancer (MALT lymphoma)
- Abdominal pain worse between meals, relieved by eating
- People with anemia due to low iron and no other reasons to explain their anemia
- Persons with a first degree family member (mother, father, sister, brother) with stomach cancer
- In some situations, testing and treating people who live in close quarters with an infected person may be beneficial

WHAT ARE THE TESTS?

H. pylori infection is usually diagnosed through easy breath, stool and blood tests.

The most accurate way to test for *H. pylori* is to run a scope with a camera into the mouth and down through the esophagus into the stomach. Because this procedure is more invasive than breath and stool tests, it is generally only done on people suspected to have an ulcer, or who are at high risk for other complications from *H. pylori*, such as stomach cancer.