



# About *Helicobacter pylori* Infection

Information for Patients from ACG's 2024 Clinical Guideline: Treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* Infection



## Overview

*Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a germ that can infect some peoples' stomachs. Although it usually causes no symptoms, infection may cause symptoms like upper belly pain, burning, or discomfort.

**1 IN 3**

Roughly one in three American adults has *H. pylori* infection but most will not have symptoms.



Most people with *H. pylori* infection caught it when they were children.



*H. pylori* infection can lead to serious problems like peptic ulcers and stomach cancer.

## Testing



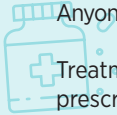
There are several tests for *H. pylori* infection.

- Simple breath or stool tests are very accurate and are the best ways to test for *H. pylori* infection.
- Blood tests are widely available but can provide misleading results.



If you have a family member with stomach cancer, or one who has been diagnosed with *H. pylori* infection, you should get tested!

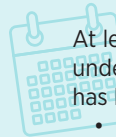
## Treatment



Anyone who has *H. pylori* infection should be treated for it.

Treatment is a 2-week course of 2 to 4 medicines prescribed by your doctor.

- To help choose the best treatment, your doctor should ask about which antibiotics you have taken in the past. It is very important to take the complete course of medicines, even if you start to "feel better."



At least 4 weeks after finishing treatment, you should undergo a breath or stool test to make sure the infection has been cured.

- Fortunately, once the infection is cured, it only rarely comes back.
- If the infection is still present after treatment, your doctor will work with you to find a combination of medicines (that are different from those previously used) to treat the infection.

## What questions should I ask health care providers about my care?

- Should I be tested for *H. pylori* infection?
- If so, how can I be tested?
- If infected, how should I be treated? (It is important that your health care provider knows about any medication allergies and about the antibiotics you may have taken in the past.)
- What side effects might I get from the treatment?
- Should my family members be tested for *H. pylori* infection?
- After treatment, how should I be tested to make sure the infection has been cured?

## What warning signs or alarm symptoms should never be ignored?

*H. pylori* infection usually does not cause symptoms. However, the following should not be ignored:

- Frequent or severe pain or discomfort in the upper part of the belly
- Weight loss that is unexplained or unintentional
- Persistent vomiting
- Vomiting of red blood or black material that looks like coffee grounds
- Passing black stools
- Family history of stomach cancer



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