



Helicobacter Pylori

What is Helicobacter pylori?

Helicobacter pylori, H. pylori, is a bacterium, germ, that lives in the inner lining of the stomach. It produces a number of chemicals that damage the lining of the stomach. Once the infection is present, it persists for many years, if not for life.

How common is H. pylori in UK?

About 40% of people in the UK have H. pylori in their stomach so it is very common. In nearly 9 out of 10 people who have H. pylori it does not cause any problems.

When is it diagnosed?

The infection may be found at the same time as a peptic ulcer, at a test called gastroscopy. However there are other tests.

1. Breath test

Analysing a sample of your breath shows if you are infected. Breath tests are accurate, safe, simple and quick to perform. They are a particularly useful test to check whether the infection has been successfully treated.

2. Blood test

They can detect recent or current infection. They are not useful for checking for successful eradication because H. pylori remains in the blood for years.

During the gastroscopy procedure — where a flexible tube is passed into your stomach, a small sample can be taken for culture, to detect H. pylori.

3. Gastroscopy plus biopsy

4. Stool test

What diseases does H. pylori cause?

H. pylori can cause: -

- Inflammation of the lining of the stomach — gastritis
- Duodenal ulcer — ulcer in the first part of the small bowel
- Gastric ulcer — stomach ulcer
- Some cancers of the stomach — H. pylori is associated with a slightly increased risk of stomach cancer

Treating H. pylori

Treating H.pylori not only helps the ulcer to heal, but it greatly reduces the risk of the ulcer coming back in the future. Even though H. pylori is a common cause of ulcers, there are some drugs which cause ulcers such as aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAID's, normally used for treating joint and muscle pains.

Treatment

There is no simple treatment. A range of drug combinations are used. Treatment combinations include an anti-ulcer drug and 2 types of antibiotics. The course must be completed and the drug combinations reduce the risk of H. pylori becoming resistant to treatment.

Side effects using 3 types of drugs increases due to the quantities of the drugs and they may include nausea, diarrhoea, skin rashes, taste disturbances and interactions with other medications. Very rarely more serious side effects occur and it is important to tell your doctor if you have ever had side effects with antibiotics.

How do I know treatment has worked?

If you take the treatment exactly as directed, the chance of success is high. H. pylori elimination should be checked if you have had a serious ulcer complication, perforation or bleeds, or if your ulcer has often recurred.

Gastroscopy to check the stomach and to biopsy the ulcer to check for eradication

Breath test can be used.

Am I likely to be infected again?

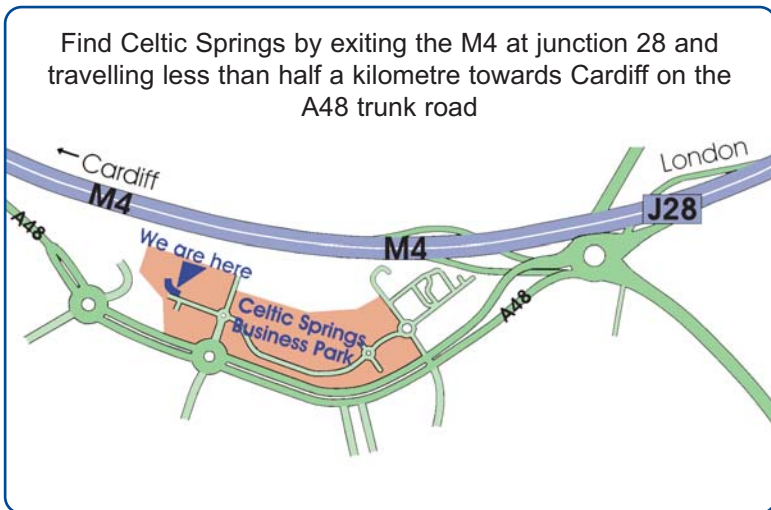
No. The chances of becoming infected again after successful treatment is 0% - 1% per year.

It is not usually recommended to test other family members — unless there are special circumstances and these can be discussed with your specialist.

For further information:
www.corecharity.org.uk

This fact sheet was designed to help you. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions of our specialists and nurses.

If you have any problems following your procedure call Nucleus Healthcare during opening hours
08:00 hrs. — 18:00 hrs.



Nucleus Healthcare
Spoooner Close,
Celtic Springs Business Park,
Newport, NP10 8FZ

Tel: 01633 815900
Fax: 01633 815915