



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT Helicobacter Pylori

What is Helicobacter Pylori?

Helicobacter pylori (which is written in an abbreviated form as H. pylori) is a type of bacterium, a bug or germ, that lives in the sticky fluid (mucus) which coats the lining of the human stomach and duodenum.

It infects the stomachs of roughly 60% of the world's adult population. H. pylori infections are usually harmless, but they're responsible for the majority of ulcers in the stomach and small intestine known as peptic ulcers.

A peptic ulcer looks like a mouth ulcer and is a raw patch in the lining of the stomach or duodenum.

WHAT DOES H.PYLORI DO?

H. pylori acts as an irritant to the lining of the stomach and this causes inflammation of the stomach (gastritis). H. pylori also appears to be the cause of peptic ulceration. A combination of factors (including H. pylori, gastric acid, genetic background, use of aspirin or drugs for arthritis and cigarette smoking) may combine to cause ulcers of the stomach or duodenum. A small proportion of people who are infected can develop cancer of the stomach in later life. This is probably because of chronic irritation to the lining of the stomach, through decades of long term infection. There is no evidence at present that eradication of H. pylori in adults will reduce the risk of gastric cancer.

HOW CAN I GET IT?

People infected with H.Pylori are thought to be highly contagious for a matter of days or weeks and transmission is thought to be via the fingers coming in contact with infected vomit or stools.

This is a life long infection for most people, perhaps 50 years and can result in the loss of stomach secretions, at which point in some people it disappears.

Today's improved hygiene in the home means that very few children are now infected in the UK.





SHOULD I RECEIVE TREATMENT?

If you have definitive proof of peptic ulceration then you should receive treatment to eradicate *H. pylori*. Patients will usually have a long term cure of their ulcer disease if the treatment clears all traces of *H. pylori* infection from the stomach. However if it is impossible to clear the stomach, you can be protected from relapse by long term daily treatment with a drug to decrease gastric acidity.

If you have no sign of peptic ulceration, you will not benefit from eradication of *H. pylori*.

There is currently no vaccination available against *H. pylori*.

For more information visit

www.patient.co.uk/health/Helicobacter-Pylori-and-Stomach-Pain.htm

www.corecharity.org.uk/Helicobacter-pylori/Page-2.html

www.bsg.org.uk/patients/patients/general/helicobacter-pylori.html



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