

GI Hub

Helicobacter pylori infection

Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) is a **common bacterial infection** that affects the stomach. About half of people worldwide have it, and it is usually picked up in childhood. Most people never have symptoms, but it can cause problems for some.[\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#)

Symptoms:

Many people with H. pylori have no symptoms. When symptoms do happen, they may include:

- Pain or discomfort in the upper belly (dyspepsia)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Feeling full quickly when eating
- Loss of appetite
- Bloating
- In more serious cases, black or bloody stools, vomiting blood, or unexplained weight loss

H. pylori can cause **peptic ulcers** (sores in the stomach or upper intestine), chronic gastritis (inflammation of the stomach lining), and increases the risk of stomach cancer.[\[2\]\[4\]\[5\]\[6\]](#)

Prevalence:

H. pylori infects about half of the world's population. It is more common in developing countries and among people with lower socioeconomic status.[\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#)

Diagnosis:

Doctors may test for H. pylori if you have symptoms like stomach pain, ulcers, or unexplained anemia. Testing is also recommended for people with a history of ulcers, certain stomach cancers, or long-term use of medicines like aspirin or NSAIDs.[\[4\]\[6\]\[7\]](#)

Tests include:

- **Noninvasive tests:** Stool antigen test or urea breath test (these are easy and do not require a procedure)

- **Invasive tests:** Endoscopy with biopsy (used if you have alarm symptoms or are older)

It's important to stop taking acid-reducing medicines (like proton pump inhibitors) before testing, as they can affect results.[\[4\]\[7\]](#)

Treatment:

If you have H. pylori, treatment is recommended to prevent ulcers and other complications. Treatment usually includes:

- A **proton pump inhibitor (PPI)** to reduce stomach acid
- Two or more **antibiotics** to kill the bacteria
- Sometimes **bismuth** (a medicine that helps protect the stomach lining)

The most common first treatment is **bismuth quadruple therapy** (PPI, bismuth, and two antibiotics), especially in areas where resistance to certain antibiotics is high. Your doctor will choose the best medicines based on your allergies and local resistance patterns.[\[5\]\[6\]\[8\]](#)

After treatment, it's important to check that the infection is gone, usually with a stool antigen test or breath test about 4 weeks after finishing treatment.[\[4\]\[6\]\[7\]\[8\]](#)

What to expect:

Most people are cured with one round of treatment, but sometimes a second treatment is needed. Getting rid of H. pylori can help prevent ulcers and lower your risk of stomach cancer.[\[2\]\[4\]\[6\]\[9\]](#)

If you have questions or new symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider.

References

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