



The Surgical Institute
at True North

CHE MILLER MD | KAYLA WATKINS-JONES MD
BRETT LOCKE APRN

What is H. Pylori?

Helicobacter Pylori Overview

Helicobacter Pylori, also known as “H. pylori”, is a bacterium that is commonly found in the stomach. It is present in approximately one-half of the world’s population. The vast majority of people infected with H. pylori infection have no symptoms and will never develop problems. However, H. pylori is capable of causing a number of digestive problems, including ulcers, and, **much less commonly**, stomach cancer.

H. Pylori Risk Factors

H. pylori is spread by consuming food or water contaminated with fecal matter. H. pylori causes changes to the stomach and duodenum, making them more vulnerable to damage from digestive juices, such as stomach acid. This causes chronic inflammation in the walls of the stomach or duodenum.

H. Pylori Symptoms

Most individuals with chronic gastritis or duodenitis have no symptoms. However, some people develop more serious problems, including stomach or duodenal ulcers.

Ulcers can cause a variety of symptoms or no symptoms at all, with the most common ulcer symptoms including:

1. Pain or discomfort (usually in the upper abdomen)
2. Bloating
3. Feeling full after eating a small amount of food
4. Lack of appetite
5. Nausea or vomiting
6. Dark or tar-colored stools
7. Ulcers that bleed can cause a low blood count and fatigue

H. Pylori Diagnosis

There are several ways to diagnose H. pylori, however, the most reliable is tissue biopsy, obtained by performing an upper endoscopy. Other methods of testing are available with blood, breath, and stool studies, though false-negative results do occur.

Who should be tested for H. Pylori?

If you have any symptoms - Diagnostic testing for Helicobacter pylori infection is recommended if you have active gastric or duodenal ulcers or if you have a past history of ulcers. Although H. pylori infection is the most common cause of ulcers, not all patients with ulcers have H. pylori. Certain medications (eg, aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), naproxen (Aleve)) can also cause peptic ulcers.

H. Pylori Treatment

People with a history of peptic ulcer disease, active gastric ulcers, or active duodenal ulcers associated with H. pylori infection should be treated. Successful treatment of H. pylori can help the ulcer to heal, prevent ulcers from coming back, and reduce the risk of ulcer complications (like bleeding).

Medications - Treatment for H. pylori includes a combination of a proton pump inhibitor and two antibiotics, all taken twice daily for 2 weeks.

Treatment failure - Up to 20% of patients with Helicobacter pylori infection are not cured after completing their first course of treatment. A second treatment regimen is usually recommended in this case. Repeat upper endoscopy may also be performed if symptoms continue after treatment.