

Helicobacter pylori Patient Information

What is Helicobacter pylori?

Helicobacter pylori (*H. pylori*) is a bacterium that infects the surface of the stomach. In fact it is now recognised as the most common infection in the world.

H. pylori can cause peptic ulcer disease and non-ulcer dyspepsia. It is a risk factor for cancers of the stomach mucosa. What tests do I need?

Patients under the age of 45 years, experiencing dyspepsia, can have a blood test to detect *H. pylori* antibody. There is a second test called a Urea Breath Test that is mainly of value in demonstrating that eradication treatment has been effective. Patients over 45 years, are encouraged to undergo Endoscopy, to avoid missing detection of early cancers of the stomach.

What will I have to do?

Antibody Test

No preparation is required. Your doctor will provide you with a request form and blood will be collected by a qualified person at the doctor's surgery or at a pathology collection centre.

Breath Test

1. The test is usually performed at a pathology collection centre.
2. Patient should not be pregnant or lactating.
3. Patient should be older than 15 years.
4. Patient has to cease taking antibiotics 4 week prior to testing (eg. Amoxicillin, Tetracycline, Metronidazole (Flagyl), Denol (Bismuth Tricitrate)).
5. Patient has to cease taking proton-pump inhibitors for 7 days prior to testing (eg. Omeprazole (Lozec). In the interim, Mylanta,

Gaviscon, Rennie or QuickEze may be substituted but these must be withheld during the fasting period before the test.

6. Patient **MUST** fast for 6 hours before test (this means **NO FOOD OR DRINK**).

What will take place during testing?

Antibody Test

A doctor, nurse or qualified pathology technician will collect 10mL of blood from your arm.

Breath Test

1. The patient should remain seated for the duration of the test.
2. The patient **MUST have FASTED for the 6 hours prior to the test. This means NO FOOD OR DRINK.**
3. The patient will be given a small capsule and asked to swallow it whole. You may wash the capsule down with water using the cup supplied (fill to 2/3 full).
4. The patient should wait 3 minutes while remaining seated.
5. Another small amount of water will be given.
6. Wait 7 minutes again while remaining seated.
7. Instruct the patient to take a deep breath and **HOLD** their breath for 5-10 seconds.
8. The patient then breathes slowly through a straw that has been placed in the balloon until the balloon is firm.
9. If the balloon is not filled simply take another deep breath, hold for 5-10 seconds and continue to blow until firm.
10. The collector will remove the straw and twist the neck of the balloon a few times and tie a knot in the neck of the balloon.

11. The patient has now finished the test and is free to leave the collection centre.

What happens if the tests are positive?

There is an antibiotic treatment program available that your doctor can prescribe. After this treatment a further breath test is valuable to determine that the bacterium has been eradicated.

Who should NOT have the breath test?

Although the breath test contains a small amount of radioactivity, it is equivalent to 35% of a single day's exposure to natural background in a typical city. The radiation dose is approximately 1/3000ths that which is received from the lowest nuclear medicine procedure (ie Xray). However we would recommend that specialist advice be sought before administering this test to children, pregnant or breast feeding women.

Where do I go for the test?

[Hunter Area Pathology Collection](#) centres can perform a Breath Test. Contact your nearest collection centre to make an appointment.

For details on collection centres in other NSW areas contact:

Hunter Area Pathology Service

Customer Service Unit

Phone: 02 4921400

Toll Free: 1800 801949

Facsimile: 02 49214400