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H. pylori (*Helicobacter Pylori*) Infection

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Helicobacter pylori (*H. pylori*) infection facts

What Is *H. pylori*, and Is It Contagious?

H. pylori (*Helicobacter pylori*) are spiral shaped bacteria. *H. pylori* bacteria are unique because they produce the enzyme urease that allows the bacteria to live in the harsh environment of the stomach. The urease enzyme it produces reacts with urea to form ammonia that neutralizes enough of the stomach's acid to allow the organisms to survive in the tissues.

H. pylori is considered to be contagious and passed from person to person by:

- saliva,
- fecal contamination (in food or water), and
- poor hygiene practices.

[Read more about *H. pylori* and how it is spread »](#)

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Body Noises

- *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a bacterium that causes chronic inflammation (infection) in the stomach and duodenum, and is a common contagious cause of ulcers worldwide. These bacteria are sometimes termed "ulcer bacteria."
- *H. pylori* causes chronic inflammation (gastritis) by invading the lining of the stomach and producing a cytotoxin termed vacuolating cytotoxin A (Vac-A), and thus can lead to ulcer formation.
- Although many infected individuals have no symptoms, other infected individuals may have occasional episodes of
 - belching,
 - bloating,
 - nausea and vomiting and
 - abdominal discomfort.
- More serious infections cause symptoms of
 - abdominal pain,
 - nausea and vomiting that may include vomiting blood,
 - passing dark or tarry like stools,
 - fatigue,
 - low red blood cell count (anemia),
 - decreased appetite,
 - diarrhea,
 - peptic ulcers,
 - heartburn, and
 - bad breath.
- *H. pylori* is contagious; however, some individuals may be simply have the bacteria in their gut, and the bacteria causes no symptoms of disease.
- The diagnosis of *H. pylori* infection includes tests for antibodies in blood, a urea breath test, tests for antigens in stool, and endoscopic biopsies.
- Chronic infections with *H. pylori* weakens the natural defenses of the stomach so most individuals with symptoms need to be treated to prevent ulceration formation.
- *H. pylori* can be difficult to eradicate from the stomach with antibiotics because of antibiotic resistance; consequently, two or more antibiotics are usually given together (treatment regimen) with a protein pump inhibitor (PPI) medication (for example, omeprazole [Prilosec, Zegerid] or esomeprazole [Nexium]) termed *H. pylori* treatment and/or triple therapy.
- In general, patients should be treated if they are infected with *H. pylori* and have ulcers. Moreover, patients who develop MALT lymphoma  (a type of cancer) of the stomach have the lymphoma progress if *H. pylori* is not treated and eradicated.
- Because about 50% of the world's population is infected with *H. pylori*, treatment and prevention of side effects and complications is difficult; however, recommendations to help prevent ulcers include:
 - Reduce or stop alcohol intake and quit smoking.