

Positive Helicobacter pylori test

We have the results of your stool test, which has come back positive for a stomach bug known as Helicobacter pylori (H. Pylori).

It is very common to test positive for this bug. 1 in 4 people in the UK will have H. Pylori in their stomach at some stage in their life. Once you have the bug, unless treated, the infection usually stays for the rest of your life.

What symptoms does Helicobacter pylori cause?

In most people with H. Pylori the bug causes no symptoms or problems. Those who do have symptoms usually develop some level of irritation of the stomach lining (gastritis). This is because H. Pylori increases the amount of stomach acid you make. You may get symptoms similar to that of indigestion (burning or pain in the top part of your stomach with or before food).

Sometimes the H. Pylori can lead to a stomach ulcer. Ulcers cause pain, which can vary in intensity from mild discomfort to severe pain. The pain may be severe enough to wake you during the night. Drinking milk or taking an antacid may relieve the pain.

What treatment is available?

H. Pylori can be cleared from the stomach with a combination of three drugs (triple therapy). Evidence shows that triple therapy can eradicate H. Pylori in around 80-85 per cent of cases. The main reason why therapy to eradicate H. Pylori fails is that patients do not always take their medication as prescribed. It is very important for you to take all your tablets every day as directed.

The doctor has issued a prescription for triple therapy. It contains two different antibiotic tablets to take over the course of a week and an anti-acid medication. Please read the instructions very carefully. You must not drink alcohol whilst you are on these antibiotics. If you are registered for electronic prescribing the prescription will automatically go to your nominated pharmacy. If you are not registered for electronic prescribing the prescription will be waiting for you to collect from your usual Ridge surgery. Please let us know if you think you may be allergic to any of the medications before using them.

Although the infection may have cleared, you could still have ongoing symptoms for a month afterwards as your stomach heals so you may need to use the anti-acid tablet for a bit longer.

There is no need for further testing afterwards as most cases will have resolved. More information can be found on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk