

H. pylori in Children



What is H. pylori?

Helicobacter pylori or *H. pylori* is a bacteria that infects the stomach. The infection is very common. Luckily, most of those infected never experience any symptoms

and have no signs of disease. However, some adults and a small number of children with the infection will develop inflammation and even ulcers of the stomach or the small intestine.

Currently, we do not know how people get *H. pylori* infection. Contaminated food or water and mouth-to-mouth contact through saliva are the main ways to contract the infection. It is unknown why symptoms develop in some children and not in others.

Testing for H. pylori.

Several tests are available for detecting a *H. pylori* infection. The best test, at present, is a combination of endoscopy and biopsy. For an endoscopy, the child is given medicine to make them sleep and a flexible fiber optic tube with a video system is inserted into the mouth. This allows a direct look at the lining of the esophagus, stomach and small intestine for ulcers and inflammation. Several small tissue samples (biopsies) are taken and analyzed for signs of inflammation and to identify the bacteria.

The primary goal in testing is to determine the possible cause of the child's symptoms and not simply to detect the presence of an *H. pylori* infection. Some children may actually have the bacteria, but not necessarily have any inflammation. For this reason, endoscopy is not helpful unless it will change the management of your child's disease. Your doctor can help you decide if testing is right for your child.

How is H. pylori treated?

The best way to get rid of *H. pylori* is to use triple-therapy for 10-14 days. Usually antibiotics such as *clarithromycin*, *amoxicillin* and *metronidazole* and an acid-blocking drug like ranitidine, lansoprazole or *omeprazole* are prescribed in various combinations.

Finishing all medications prescribed by your doctor is very important for successfully eliminating infection.

After treatment, children may sometimes complain of discomfort in their stomachs and this can take several

months to resolve completely. Continuing the acid blocking medicines for several more weeks can be helpful in these cases.

Triple therapy is recommended for children who have active *H. pylori* infection and are suffering from pain, nausea, poor appetite or heartburn and those in whom ulcers have been found during an endoscopy. Some doctors might also choose to treat patients who only have inflammation in the stomach. Triple therapy is not right for every child. Ask your doctor if it is the right treatment for your child.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:



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