

H. pylori and Stomach Ulcers: What You Should Know

What is a stomach ulcer?

These ulcers are sores in your stomach. They are often caused by a bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori* (hel-i-ko-back-ter pie-lore-ee). They can also be caused by taking certain medicines, like ibuprofen, aspirin, or naproxen.

What are the symptoms?

Stomach ulcers can cause pain or burning in the middle of your stomach, just under your rib cage. This is called dyspepsia. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms because other problems may cause similar pain.

How do I know if I have *H. pylori*?

It is common in people of all ages. Your doctor can test your blood, stool, or breath to see if you have the bacteria. Your doctor will decide what type of test is best for you. You should also tell your doctor what medicines you are taking.

Your doctor might use a small tube with a camera on the end, called an endoscope, to look down your throat and into your stomach to see the ulcer better.

What do I do if I have *H. pylori*?

Your doctor will give you antibiotics to treat the infection. You might need two or three antibiotics. You will also need to take medicine to decrease the acid in your stomach so that the ulcer can heal. It is important to take the medicine exactly how your doctor tells you and to take all of the medicine.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/ulcers.html>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/digestive-diseases/peptic-ulcer/Pages/overview.aspx>

National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/helicobacterpyloriinfections.html>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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