Clo-test for Helicobacter pylori

Information for patients
Endoscopy
What is Helicobacter pylori?

Helicobacter pylori is a type of bacteria that lives in the sticky fluid that coats the lining of your stomach.

It is usually a life-long infection and can often cause no problems at all.

However, the bacteria can sometimes weaken the protective mucous coating of the stomach. It is this weakening that allows acid to get through to the sensitive lining beneath.

Both the acid and the bacteria can then irritate this sensitive lining causing it to become sore and can sometimes develop into an ulcer.

What are the symptoms of an ulcer?

The most common symptom of an ulcer is abdominal discomfort, which most patients describe as:

- A dull gnawing ache
- An ache that comes and goes for several days
- An ache that occurs 2-3 hours after a meal
- An ache that occurs in the middle of the night (when the stomach is empty)
- An ache that is relieved by eating
- An ache that is relieved by antacids

Other symptoms may include:

- Weight loss
- Poor appetite
- Bloating, belching
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Some people with ulcers have very mild symptoms or even none at all.
How is Helicobacter pylori diagnosed?

If we think you might have a problem with Helicobacter pylori, then, whilst you are having your gastroscopy, we will take a small biopsy. This is called a Clo-test. The Clo-test takes about 30-60 minutes to process and we then send the result of your test to your GP.

To get your result, contact your GP 4-5 days after your gastroscopy and he or she will give you the result.

How is Helicobacter pylori treated?

If your Clo-test shows you have Helicobacter pylori your GP will prescribe some antibiotics for you. These should clear up the bacteria.

If the result of the Clo-test shows you have not got Helicobacter pylori, but the Endoscopist has seen an ulcer in your stomach during your gastroscopy, you will be given medication which will help to reduce the acid you produce in your stomach and heal the ulcer.

There are two types of drugs that may be used to treat your ulcer. It is up to your hospital consultant or GP to decide which is most suitable for you and you may be given any one of the following:

- **Proton Pump Inhibitors** – which block the production of stomach acid:
  - Omeprazole
  - Esomeprazole
  - Lansoprazole
  - Pantoprazole
  - Rabeprazole

- **H2 Receptor Antagonists** – which prevent the release of acid in to the stomach:
  - Cimetidine
  - Famotidine
  - Nizatidine
  - Ranitadine