**What is Helicobacter Pylori (H. pylori)?**

*Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori) is a type of bacteria that can enter your body and live in the lining of your stomach.

**How do you get infected with H. pylori?**

Most people get *H. pylori* as a child.

However, it is most likely that you can get *H. pylori* infection from unclean food, water and eating utensils. The infection may also be spread through direct contact with saliva of infected people.

**How common is H. pylori infection?**

More than half of the world's population is infected. It is more common in Middle Easterns, Asians and Eastern Europeans.
What diseases do H. pylori cause?

Most people with H. pylori infection never develop any symptoms or diseases. It is still not known why certain people develop ulcers from the infection while others do not.

Common diseases caused by H. pylori are:

- **Gastritis**
  
  It is an inflammation of the stomach lining. In some cases, gastritis can lead to peptic ulcer and increase risk of stomach cancer. Burning stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and feeling of fullness are common symptoms.

- **Peptic ulcers**
  
  A peptic ulcer refers to a sore or a hole in the lining of the stomach or the upper part of your small intestine. Symptoms include burning stomach pain, feeling of fullness, bloating or belching, fatty food intolerance and heartburn. If left untreated, it can perforate your stomach or small intestine and cause bleeding, shock or even death.

- **Stomach cancer**
  
  H. pylori infection increases the risk of stomach cancer but only a small minority of infected people will develop this problem. Symptoms are similar to gastritis and peptic ulcer, but are more severe.

How is H. Pylori diagnosed?

- **Breath Test**
  
  A breath test shows if you are infected by analysing a sample of your breath. The test is simple, quick, safe and accurate. It also can be used to check whether the infection has been successfully treated or not.

- **Endoscopy**
  
  The doctor will pass a flexible tube into your stomach, which allows small samples to be taken. H. pylori can be detected by looking at the samples under the microscope, using a chemical reaction (Rapid Urease Test / CLO test) or to grow it in the laboratory.

- **Stool test**
  
  Used to detect H. pylori antibodies or antigen in stool.

- **Blood test**
  
  It can detect specific antibodies that the body's immune system develops in response to H. pylori infection. However, it is unable to confirm if there is a current infection or a previous infection.

Who should be tested for H. pylori?

Diagnostic testing for H. pylori infection is recommended if you have active gastritis or peptic ulcers.

How should H. pylori be treated?

There is no single drug that is effective to treat H. pylori. Drugs for H. pylori infection are usually given in combination.

Treatment combinations (Triple therapy) include an ulcer-healing drug (e.g. Omeprazole, Lansoprazole, Esomeprazole, Pantoprazole) and two antibiotics (e.g. Amoxicillin, Clarithromycin, Metronidazole, Tetracycline, or Tinidazole). Treatment duration is for two weeks. Resistant cases may require additional treatment as advised by your doctor.

Am I likely to become infected again?

No. The risk of being re-infected is very low at about 0.5 - 1.0% per year.

What can you do to prevent H. pylori infection?

To help prevent infection, you are advised to follow good hygiene practices including proper hand washing, eating food that has been properly washed and cooked, and to drink water from a safe, clean source.