

H. Pylori, What It Is ?? + Natural Treatments

According to the CDC, about 66 percent of the world's human population is infected with *Helicobacter pylori*, commonly shortened to *H. pylori*. In developing countries, the numbers are even worse, with up to 80 percent of adults and 10 percent of children likely having a *H. pylori* infection. If you have this infection, you're actually most likely not to have any *H. pylori* symptoms. But, having this bacteria living in your body can make your risk of developing gastric cancer up to six times higher. Plus, *H. pylori* bacteria is often at the root of other major digestive problems, like peptic ulcers and gastritis. So, not only can *H. pylori* cause stomach ulcers, it can also cause ulcers in your esophagus or small intestine.

You're probably wondering how do you get *H. pylori* if it's such a common infection? Unfortunately, it can be as simple as sharing drinks or utensils with someone who is already infected with *H. pylori* bacteria. There are conventional treatments for this infection, but they're not without their negative side effects. Antibiotics, for example, may or may not kill the bad bacteria causing a *H. pylori* infection, but they will also annihilate your good bacteria as well. Thankfully, there are natural ways to treat, as well as prevent, a *Helicobacter pylori* infection.

What is *H. pylori*?

So, exactly what is *H. pylori*? *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a spiral shaped bacteria. It causes chronic inflammation and infection in the stomach and duodenum (the first part of the small intestine immediately beyond the stomach). This type of bacteria is often called "ulcer bacteria" because it creates a cytotoxin (vacuolating cytotoxin A or Vac-A) that can precipitate an ulcer forming somewhere in the digestive system.

Where exactly can *H. pylori* be found in the body? *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria typically makes its home in the mucosal layer, which covers and guards the tissues lining your stomach and small intestine. When this bacteria successfully inflames the inner layer of the stomach, an ulcer can form. *H. pylori* is said to cause more than 90 percent of duodenal (upper small intestine) ulcers and up to 80 percent of gastric (stomach) ulcers.

Is *H. pylori* contagious? Yes, an infection with *H. pylori* appears to be contagious according to experts. It's still a little fuzzy as to how exactly it gets passed from person to person. Because *H. pylori* seems to run in families, and also seems to be more common in crowded living situations and unsanitary conditions, all point towards *H. pylori*'s contagious nature.

Signs & Symptoms

Majority of people with an *H. pylori* infection won't even have a clue that they have it because they have zero symptoms.

Other times, the infection will show itself in occasional *H. pylori* symptoms like:

- Bloating
- Belching
- Nausea
- Abdominal discomfort
- Vomiting

More serious infections can cause symptoms of *H. pylori* include:

- Abdominal pain
 - Fatigue
 - Heartburn
 - Nausea and vomiting that can include vomiting blood
 - Dark or tarry stools
 - Diarrhea
 - Bad breath
 - Anemia (low red blood cell count)
 - Decreased or loss of appetite
 - Peptic ulcers
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Causes & Risk Factors

H. pylori causes are not many. Mainly, you can get *H. pylori* from person-to-person transmission by way of direct contact with the saliva, vomit or fecal matter of an infected individual. So, kissing and sharing utensils are two common ways the bacteria spreads. You can also contract *H. pylori* from consumption of contaminated water or food.

Childhood is actually when you're most at risk for getting *H. pylori*, especially under circumstances like these:

- Living with someone, like a parent, who already has *H. pylori*.
 - A crowded living situation with many people.
 - A lack of clean and reliable water.
 - Your home is in a developing country where unsanitary and crowded living situations are more prevalent.
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Conventional Treatment

In order to diagnose a *Helicobacter pylori* infection, your doctor will have you take an *H. pylori* breath test, stool test or blood test.

Treatment for *H. pylori* usually includes several medications with at least two of them being antibiotics to hopefully kill the bacteria. The other medication are usually acid reducers. Why multiple antibiotics? Conventional wisdom says a single antibiotic may not kill the bacteria, so they typically use at least two at the same time.

Conventional *H. pylori* treatment also typically includes acid reducers like esomeprazole, lansoprazole, omeprazole or pantoprazole, especially if the patient has symptoms of an ulcer or heartburn. Bismuth subsalicylate is also commonly recommended. In addition, your doctor may also recommend histamine blocking medications to reduce stomach acid.

So, all together, we're talking about possibly consuming 14 or more medications every day for weeks. Around a week or two after finishing your treatment regimen, your doctor will likely retest you to see if the treatment successfully eradicated the *H. pylori* bacteria.

Sometimes, the bacteria is still there and patients are instructed to take another two weeks of medications. It's approximated that as much as 20 percent of *H. pylori* sufferers will have a reoccurring infection.

Natural *H. pylori* Treatments

If you're not interested in conventional treatment, you have some options to treat *H. pylori* naturally. In general, it's really important that we (the world population) find dependable natural treatments of this bacteria since antibiotic resistance against *H. pylori* is on the rise and does not seem to be slowing down anytime soon.

These are the some of the best, scientifically-backed treatments to naturally fight this bacterial infection:

1. Probiotics

Since *H. pylori* is an unwanted or "bad bacteria" in the gut, it makes total sense that probiotics (the "good bacteria") can help to naturally fight this type of infection. A 2012 placebo-controlled pilot study published in the journal *Inflammation and Allergy Drug Targets* looked at the effects of probiotics on people with dyspepsia who tested positive for pylori bacteria. They found that following treatment with an eight-strain probiotic supplement, 13 of the 40 patients had a complete eradication of their *H. pylori*.

Another more recent study in 2017 makes an excellent point — the common antibiotics used to get rid of *H. pylori* (including amoxicillin, clarithromycin and metronidazole) often do not successfully eradicate *H. pylori* in sufferers due to antibiotic resistance, which is becoming more prevalent as overuse of antibiotics continues.

So, sometimes people are taking antibiotics for *H. pylori* and not only are they killing off all their vital and health-promoting good bacteria, but they're not even killing off the bad *H. pylori* bacteria! This 2017 study concludes that if people do take antibiotics for an *H. pylori* infection, if they also take probiotics then the likelihood of eradication is more likely and negative GI effects of antibiotics are less likely.

Lactobacillus fermentum, *Lactobacillus casei* and *Lactobacillus brevis* are three specific strains of probiotics that have been highlighted in scientific research for their ability to fight *H. pylori* bacteria.

2. Black Seed (*Nigella Sativa*)

Black seed has many proven benefits including successfully fighting *H. pylori* infections. Research from 2010 found that giving *H. pylori* patients two grams of ground black seeds daily along with omeprazole (an acid blocker) was more effective at treating *H. pylori* than the standard conventional “triple therapy” of an acid blocker plus two different antibiotics. Doses of black seed at one or three grams daily were less effective. The study concludes that “*N. sativa* seeds possess clinically useful anti-*H. pylori* activity, comparable to triple therapy.” Black seeds also have acid reducing and gastro-protective abilities.

3. Broccoli Sprouts

Broccoli sprouts are broccoli plants that are only a few days old. They contain extremely high levels of a sulfur-containing chemical called sulforaphane. Sulforaphane is known for its antioxidant and detoxifying benefits. Broccoli sprouts are used to make broccoli seed oil for external use as well as supplements for internal use. Research published in *Digestive Diseases and Sciences* found that 78 percent (seven out of nine) of the subjects who consumed broccoli sprouts (either 14, 28, or 56 grams) two times per day for a week tested negative for *H. pylori* at the end of the seven days and six of the subjects still tested negative at day 35 of the study.

Most recently, 2017 research published in the journal *Current Pharmaceutical Design* demonstrates that not only can the sulforaphane in broccoli sprouts fight against *H. pylori* and the gastritis it can cause, but it can also help to protect against gastrointestinal damage commonly caused by dangerous NSAIDs.

4. Green Tea

Green tea isn't just a popular beverage whether hot or cold. It's also been shown to inhibit the growth of *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria. In vitro studies have shown “profound growth effects of green tea against *Helicobacter* and importantly, demonstrate that green tea consumption can prevent gastric mucosal inflammation if ingested prior to exposure to *Helicobacter* infection.” The study concludes that green tea is natural substance that can be used to prevent as well as treat gastritis caused by *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria.

Other studies reveal that the catechins, especially epigallocatechin gallate, in green tea hold powerful antibacterial powers when it comes to fighting off *H. pylori* bacteria. **Green tea** is an excellent source of catechins. Catechins have also been associated with antioxidant, antiviral, antiplaque-forming and anti-cancer health effects.

5. Garlic

Garlic is a natural anti-inflammatory and even has natural antibiotic properties. Consuming both cooked and **raw garlic** may help to kill off *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria. A 2016 study found that people with *H. pylori* who consumed two medium-sized cloves of garlic (about 3 grams) with their lunch at noon and dinner in the evening had a significant reduction in *Helicobacter*

pylori bacteria. This demonstrates that garlic has anti-bacterial effects specifically towards *H. pylori*.

6. General *H. pylori* Diet

What to consume more of:

- Probiotic-rich foods like **kefir**, **yoghurt**.
- Wild-caught fish rich in **omega-3 fatty acids**
- Flax and chia seeds also rich in omega-3s
- Raw honey, especially **manuka honey**, in moderation used in green/black tea
- Berries, specifically raspberry, strawberry, blackberry, blueberry and bilberry
- Cruciferous vegetables, especially broccoli and broccoli sprouts

What not to consume, or at least reduce, to fight off *Helicobacter pylori* and *H. pylori* symptoms:

- Caffeine
- Carbonated beverages
- Pickled foods
- Spicy foods
- Low-fiber grains

7. Herbs

Extracts of the following herbs have been shown in scientific research to inhibit the growth of *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria:

- *Agrimonia eupatoria*
- *Hydrastis canadensis* (Goldenseal)
- *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadowsweet)
- *Salvia officinalis* (Sage)

8. Reduce Stress

If you have *H. pylori*, stress only makes symptoms worse. Plus, people with anxiety and high amounts of stress have shown poorer immune functioning, higher than normal rates of *H. pylori* infections and stomach inflammation/stomach ulcers. Make sure to incorporate more **stress relievers** into your life on a daily basis. Some great ideas include deep breathing, yoga, tai chi, acupuncture and meditation.

H. pylori Prevention

These are some of the main ways to prevent *Helicobacter pylori* in the first place:

- **Safe Drinking Water:** It may sound too simple or silly for someone living in a developed country where we, thankfully, don't have a hard time finding clean drinking water, but it's very important for everyone, old and young, to only drink water from a clean, safe source. Drinking contaminated water is one of the main ways that you can contract *H. pylori*. So, even if you live in a developed country, remember this when you're traveling abroad.
 - **Practice Good Hygiene:** Always wash your hands before you eat and, of course, after going to the bathroom. I also highly recommend not sharing utensils, glasses, etc. with strangers, friends or even family members since direct contact with infected saliva is one of the main causes of an *H. pylori* infection.
 - **Eat Properly Prepared Food:** Because food can also become contaminated with *H. pylori* bacteria, make sure that you eat food items that are cooked thoroughly and safely under clean conditions.
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Precautions

If you suspect that you may have a *Helicobacter pylori* infection, then it is definitely worth getting a *H. pylori* test as soon as you can.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, you should definitely seek urgent medical care:

- Trouble swallowing
- Persistent or severe abdominal pain
- Bloody or black vomit
- Vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Black tarry or bloody stools
- Persistent gnawing or burning pain in the area below the ribs that improves after eating, drinking milk, or taking antacids