

# TREATING *HELICOBACTER PYLORI*

March 2019

*The diagnostic tests ordered by your doctor have confirmed the presence of a Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) infection. The goal of treatment is to eradicate infection and prevent disease occurrence, such as stomach or duodenal ulcers and gastric cancer.*

*This patient information leaflet explains the basis of treatment and the overall procedure. This leaflet is complementary to your patient-doctor consultation and is not intended to replace your doctor's medical advice. Based on the latest scientific data, this patient information leaflet concerns adult patients.*

## How is *H. pylori* treated?

*H. pylori* being caused by a bacterium, **treatment is thus antibiotic-based.**

According to standard care protocols, treatment combines two or three antibiotics with a drug which reduces stomach acidity (called a proton-pump inhibitor or PPI). It may include a bismuth-based drug. **According to the protocol selected, treatment either lasts 10 or 14 days.**

During treatment, you will be followed by your general practitioner or a gastroenterologist.

**The choice and number of antibiotics will depend on your specific situation.**

The doctor will prescribe the appropriate antibiotics, which will take into account bacterium susceptibility to available antibiotics, if this test was performed during examination (biopsy analysis following fibroscopy).

The doctor and pharmacist will provide you with the names of all medications that you will need to take for the full course of treatment: drug strength, number of daily doses and precautions to take (especially concerning alcohol consumption).

→ **NB: treatment must be deferred in the event of pregnancy or breastfeeding.**

### Why is it important to comply with the right treatment doses for the right duration?

↳ Antibiotics kill bacteria gradually. Even if your symptoms improve, it is important to complete the full course of treatment to entirely eradicate *H. pylori*, a pathogenic bacterium.

↳ If the bacteria is not entirely eradicated, you carry the risk of having to take another and different course of treatment, as *H. pylori* tends to develop a resistance to short and incomplete antibiotic exposure.

## What are the treatment side effects?

Side effects can occur during treatment: nausea, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, impaired taste (metal taste), difficult digestion, headaches and dizziness. These disorders can be very debilitating. It is therefore preferable to start the treatment at a time that fits in best with your daily schedule.

If you have difficulty taking the treatment or if the effects are too unpleasant, **speak to your doctor or pharmacist.**

# After treatment, eradication of *H. pylori* must be confirmed

If taken properly, **treatment is effective in 80 to 90%** of cases. While low, risk of treatment failure (bacterial resistance, poor compliance with doses or duration of treatment) requires the verification of *H. pylori* eradication.

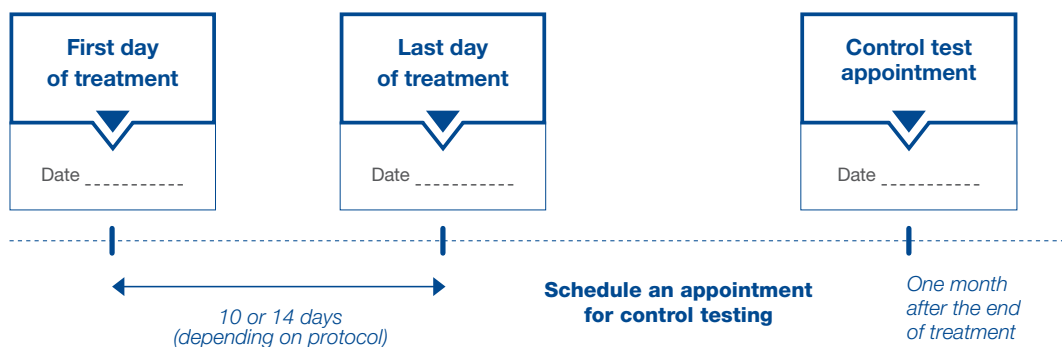
Eradication testing is based on a **simple exam, called the urea breath test**. It is prescribed by the doctor, available in pharmacies and performed in a clinical laboratory. If you are on treatment which reduces stomach acidity (proton-pump inhibitors or PPI), it should be discontinued before the test; your doctor will tell you what to do. In the event of pregnancy or breast-feeding, the breath test must be deferred.

**Taking the urea breath test is important.** You can schedule it at least 1 month after the end of treatment.

→ In case fibroscopy is required after treatment (especially for gastric ulcers), it may also confirm eradication of *H. pylori*.

 **More information on control tests following *H. pylori* treatment can be found at [www.has-sante.fr](http://www.has-sante.fr)**

## My follow-up



## What happens next?

↳ **If the bacterium is eradicated, infection and inflammation will disappear.** Given the low risk of repeat infection, subsequent testing for recurrent *H. pylori* infection is not recommended. Unless otherwise specified, you will have no specific follow-up.

↳ **If the bacterium is still present, another and different treatment option, will be offered.** In the rare event of failure a second time, an exam to test the bacterium's susceptibility to antibiotics will be performed (biopsy sampling during fibroscopy) to determine appropriate treatment. Your doctor may ask the advice of a specialist (French National Reference Centre for Campylobacters and Helicobacters).

↳ **If precancerous or cancerous lesions are found in your stomach,** the doctor will prescribe appropriate care and follow-up. In this event, it is equally important to inform all members of your family (parents, siblings and children) on the importance of *H. pylori* testing and, where applicable, treating it in order to reduce the risk of cancer.

## For more information

### Types of questions you may wish to ask your doctor regarding *H. pylori* treatment:

- What will happen if I do not take the prescribed treatment?
- What must I do if I forget to take my treatment?
- What are the side effects of the treatment prescribed?
- What will happen if I do not perform the control test?

### Ressources

**[www.has-sante.fr](http://www.has-sante.fr):** The French National Authority for Health (HAS) is an independent public body tasked to develop quality in the medical and social health sectors. You may consult the website for information on the elaboration of this patient information leaflet.

**[www.helicobacter.fr](http://www.helicobacter.fr):** site on *H. pylori*, set up by the French Helicobacter study group (Groupe d'Études Français des Hélicobacters-GEFH).

**[base-donnees-publique.medicaments.gouv.fr](http://base-donnees-publique.medicaments.gouv.fr):** site providing information on medications and their side effects.