

Helicobacter Pylori Culture



Does this test have other names?

H. pylori culture

What is this test?

This test finds out if you are infected with *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria. This is a common bacterium. It's more common in developing nations and has been linked to poor hygiene in living conditions, especially for children. Infection is more common in children than adults.

A culture test means that a tissue sample is placed in a special dish or tube containing nutrients normally found in the organism's environment. If *H. pylori* bacteria are present in the sample, they will grow until they can be seen under a microscope or in a liquid solution.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your healthcare provider believes you have an *H. pylori* infection. Symptoms of an *H. pylori* infection most often affect the stomach and digestive tract. They include belly (abdominal) pain, ulcers, and diarrhea. In some children, the infection is linked with stunted growth. It also increases the risk for stomach cancer.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

A culture is the most accurate testing method. But you may have a less invasive test done.

One example is a breath test. For a breath test, you will drink a liquid or swallow a capsule that contains a small amount of harmless radioactive material. Your healthcare provider will then check levels of this material in your breath. If *H. pylori* bacteria are present in your stomach, the bacteria will break down this radioactive substance.

Other noninvasive tests for *H. pylori* look at samples of blood, saliva, or stool.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

The culture will either be positive or negative for *H. pylori* bacteria. A positive test means that you have the bacteria. A negative, or normal, test means that you do not have it.

How is this test done?

This test is done by taking samples of stomach tissue. The tissue samples are collected during a process called an endoscopy or EGD. This is done by a healthcare provider called a gastroenterologist. It is generally done in an outpatient setting. This means you go home the same day.

Before an endoscopy, you will likely be given a sedative. Your throat will be sprayed with medicine to help keep you comfortable. The provider will place a thin, flexible tube (endoscope) down your throat and into your stomach. When the tube is in your stomach, your provider will take samples (biopsies) of stomach tissue. The entire procedure often takes about 15 minutes.

Does this test pose any risks?

Endoscopy is a fairly safe procedure. You may feel some discomfort when swallowing the endoscope. This often eases after the endoscope passes through the throat. There is also a slight risk of a reaction to the sedatives, bleeding from the biopsy, or upper GI (gastrointestinal) tearing from having an endoscopy.

What might affect my test results?

Your results may also be affected by medicines you may be taking to treat ulcers and gastroesophageal reflux.

How do I get ready for this test?

For this test:

- Don't take medicines, such as antibiotics and bismuth subsalicylate, for 1 month before the test.
- Don't take medicines for gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), such as omeprazole or esomeprazole, for up to 1 week before the test.
- Don't take medicines, such as ranitidine and famotidine, for 24 hours before the test.
- Follow any directions you are given for not eating or drinking before the test.

Check with your healthcare provider before stopping any medicines. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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