

## Stomach Ulcer Test

**Q: What is an ulcer?**

**A:** An ulcer is damage to the inner lining of the stomach or the upper part of the intestine (duodenum).

**Q: Why do people get ulcers?**

**A:** The most common cause is infection with *Helicobacter pylori* and this is responsible for up to 90 per cent of all cases of peptic ulceration.

**Q: What is *Helicobacter pylori*?**

**A:** *Helicobacter pylori* is a minute bacteria living inside and under the lining of the stomach. The groups most often affected are elderly people and people in developing countries. Those who carry this bacteria have most probably been infected during childhood. The risk of acquiring infection for an adult is modest - less than 1 per cent every year.

The bacteria may also have a role in the development of cancer of the stomach. *Helicobacter pylori* infection can be eliminated by taking antibiotics. There is about an 80 per cent chance of successful treatment of the infection and a cure for the ulcer. If the bacteria is not eliminated, most people get a recurrence of their ulcer

**Q: What does an ulcer feel like?**

**A:** This varies greatly from person to person. Many people never realise that they have an ulcer. Others feel pain or a burning sensation in their upper abdomen.

The symptoms are often described as indigestion, heartburn, hunger pangs or dyspepsia.

Some sufferers find that eating actually helps settle their discomfort for a while, others find it makes them worse. Citrus drinks, spicy and smoked foods can make the pain worse.

Finally, it is important to stress that most people with a stomach ache do not have ulcers.

**Q: What can I do to help myself?**

**A:** It's a good idea to stop smoking and moderate your alcohol intake as Smoking and drinking alcohol puts you at greater risk of developing an ulcer. If you experience the symptoms of an ulcer, consult your doctor

