

Rectory Meadow Surgery

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Patient Information Leaflet

Helicobacter Breath Test

Why has my GP suggested this test?

Some gastric problems may be associated with an infection of the stomach caused by the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*. The *Helicobacter* breath test is a simple way to determine the presence of active *Helicobacter pylori* for the following reasons:-

- To assess if your symptoms may be related to the infection
- To assess if a recent course of eradication treatment has been successful

Your doctor will then be able to decide if you need any further treatment for your condition.

Principles of the Test

All foods contain a substance called ¹³Carbon (¹³C) in varying amounts. This can be detected in the breath in carbon dioxide, the levels of which vary depending on the food you have eaten. The test is comprised of a baseline measure of ¹³C in the breath, followed by a drink of orange juice then a test drink containing the ¹³Carbon-urea. After 30 minutes, another breath test is performed. If *Helicobacter pylori* is present, the amount of ¹³C in your breath will rise.

Medications

As certain drugs invalidate the test, you must allow a 28-day gap from the following drugs before the test.

- Antibiotics
- Omeprazole (Losec), Lansoprazole (Zoton), Sulcrafate (Antepsin), Bismuth Chelate (Denol and Pepto Bismuth).
- If taking antacid drugs like Cimetidine and Ranitidine please do not take them on the morning of the test.
- Previous eradication therapy for *Helicobacter pylori* should have a 28-day gap before taking this test.

Before the Test

Prior to the test you should fast for at least eight hours. Normally the tests will be carried out in the morning so you will be asked not to eat or drink from midnight. If this is a problem e.g. because you are diabetic, please tell the nurse.

How long will it take?

The whole procedure will take approximately 40 minutes.

Breath Sample (First Set)

You will be asked to provide the first of two breath samples by simply breathing normally, by mouth through a straw held in the base of a small tube. As breath is expired the straw is gradually removed from the tube which is then immediately capped.

Test Drink

You will be asked to drink 200 mls of orange juice, followed by a test drink containing ¹³Carbon-urea and wait for 30 minutes. **Please bring your own orange juice (200 mls).**

Breath Sample (Second Set)

After the second breath sample, you may leave. The test results will be sent to your GP in approximately one to two weeks from the test.

Negative test results – no helicobacter infection, then continue with the current medication.

Positive test result – take the relevant eradication therapy exactly as prescribed for the full course.

Inconclusive result – a second test may be tried. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

Will I experience any side-effects?

The test solution contains harmless chemicals that occur naturally in the body. Nearly all patients find it causes no problems but occasionally a stomach upset has been reported. If you do have any problems please consult your doctor.