

### **Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori)**

H pylori is a bacterium which causes a stomach infection. If left untreated, it can lead to peptic ulcers. This is a common infection; it's believed that this bacterium is present in half of the population worldwide. It may go undetected for a long period of time because it does not necessarily cause common illness symptoms. It is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms and seek medical attention if they are present. The infection is treatable, Symptoms will diminish with proper care.

#### **Signs and symptoms:**

- Abdominal pain or achiness
  - Pain tends to be worse with an empty stomach
- Abdominal bloating
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Belching (burping)
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- With ulceration
  - Severe pain, dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), blood present in sputum or stool.

#### **Prevention**

- Hand washing (The number one way to prevent spread of infection)!
- Avoid contact with bodily fluids of people with suspected or diagnosed with H. pylori.
- Avoid contaminated food and water

\*Sharing crowded living spaces and living in dirty environments increase the risk of H. pylori infection\*

#### **Diagnosis**

H. Pylori screening is done to test for the presence of the bacterium. Some providers routinely test their patients for this infection, especially in geographical regions that it is particularly common. Methods of screening may include testing the breath, blood, or stool. Your surgeon may also elect to perform an endoscopy exam to access the stomach tissue for a biopsy.

#### **Treatment**

This is a treatable infection with low reinfection risk. There is a series of medications that are typically prescribed including, antibiotic/s, proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), and histamine H2 blockers. PPIs and H2 blockers help reduce and prevent acid production in the stomach to allow for tissue healing, while the antibiotics help render the infection.