

# Having a C13 urea breath test

## Department of Gastroenterology

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: May 2024

Next review: May 2027

Leaflet number: 944 Version: 3

### What is a C13 urea breath test?

A C13 urea breath test is a simple, non-invasive and painless test. We do this test to find out if you have a bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori) in your tummy (stomach).

### What is H. pylori?

H. pylori is a bacteria. It is a major cause of tummy (stomach) inflammation and ulcers. If you have H. pylori we will give you a short course of tablets to cure the infection.

### Important - how to prepare for your breath test

You must **not** have anything to eat or drink for at least **6 hours** before the test is done.

You may need to **stop** taking some of your medicines before you can have this test. This is because they can affect the results. If you do not stop taking these medicines we will cancel your test. Please contact the clinic using the phone numbers at the end of this leaflet if you need to talk about this or if you have any questions.

#### 28 days before your appointment:

Stop taking any antibiotics.

#### 14 days before your appointment:

Stop taking any proton pump inhibitors such as: omeprazole (Losec), lansoprazole (Zoton), rabeprazole (Pariet), esomeprazole (Nexium) or pantoprazole (Protium).

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

### 3 days before your appointment:

Stop taking any of the following: ranitidine (Zantac), cimetidine (Tagamet), nizatidine (Axiid) or famotidine (Pepcid).

### 24 hours before your appointment:

Stop taking any antacids such as: Gaviscon, Gaviscon Advance, Rennies, Maalox, Aligon, Gastrocote, magnesium trisilicate or settlers.

### On the day of your appointment:

You must not smoke, vape or chew gum. You can still use nicotine patches.

## What happens during the breath test?

A member of the nursing team will guide you through the test. It takes about 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions do not be afraid to ask.

1. You will begin the test by blowing gently into a set of tubes with a straw.
2. You will then be asked to take a tablet with a glass of water. You must **not** chew the tablet, you must swallow it whole. If you chew the tablet you will need to do the test again on another day. The tablet contains a diagnostic agent called C13 urea.
3. After taking the tablet, you will be asked to wait for 10 minutes in an upright position (standing or sitting).
4. You will then be asked to gently blow into a different set of tubes with a straw again. If any *H. pylori* bacteria are in your tummy (stomach), they will cause the C13 urea to be broken down into carbon dioxide gas. When you breathe out through your mouth, the amount of carbon dioxide can be measured to see if the bacteria are in your tummy (stomach).

## What happens after the test?

When your test is completed, you can go home. You can eat and drink as normal.

You can start taking any medication that you had to stop for this test.

## Is the tablet taken during the test harmful?

No, the tablet contains a harmless active substance which is found in food and in your body. It is a natural substance that is found all around us. It is not radioactive.

The amount that you take during the test is very small compared to the amount already in your body or that you eat in an average day.

If you have any food allergies or intolerances, you should talk to your doctor or health professional before taking the test.

## Are there any side effects?

Like all medicines, the tablet you are asked to take during the breath test may cause side effects. Not everybody will have these side effects. A common side effect is a change in how things taste. Other possible side effects are tummy (stomach) pain, feeling sick (nausea), being sick (vomiting), feeling tired (fatigue) and the smell of things change (parosmia). These effects are usually mild and temporary.

## When will I know the results of my test?

We will send a letter with your results and any more advice to the team that referred you. This is normally your GP or your consultant. This can take up to 4 weeks.

## Contact details

If you have any more questions or worries, before or after the test, please contact us on the telephone number below. If you are unwell or cannot come to your appointment please let us know as soon as possible.

- Patients at Leicester General Hospital:**

Medical Day Case, Ward 1: **0116 258 4012** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm).

- Patients at Loughborough Hospital:**

Outpatient Department: **01509 564 351** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm).

- Patients at Coalville Community Hospital:**

Outpatient Department: **01530 467 400** (Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm).

This number is not used for booking or cancellation. If you need to cancel your test please call **01530 467 423** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm).

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)