

Management of Resistant Helicobacter Pylori Infection

Helicobacter pylori is a bacterium that lives in the stomach. It stimulates gastric secretion that may cause gastritis, gastric ulcer and duodenal ulcer. Chronic Helicobacter pylori infection is also a risk factor for stomach cancer and lymphoma.

Prevalence of Helicobacter pylori infection varies from region to region. In Hong Kong, this prevalence is about 40% while in China it is 30-80%.

There is no recognizable symptom for most Helicobacter pylori infections. Only 3-4% of patients may have gastric distress or dyspepsia. Helicobacter pylori infection can be detected by a non-invasive breath test. An endoscopy may be also used to examine the stomach and to take a biopsy for further examination if there is a suspicion of gastric cancer.

Treatment is needed only if symptoms present. Helicobacter pylori infections generally require a combination of a proton pump inhibitor and two kinds of antibiotics. After a one-week treatment, most of the infections are cleared. In Hong Kong, the response rate of the first-line treatment is 90%. However, the number of resistant Helicobacter pylori infection cases is increasing. In Europeans, about 30% of cases are antibiotic resistant. These patients required second or third-line treatments. To prevent Helicobacter pylori becoming antibiotic resistant, it is important for patients to comply fully with the prescribed treatment.