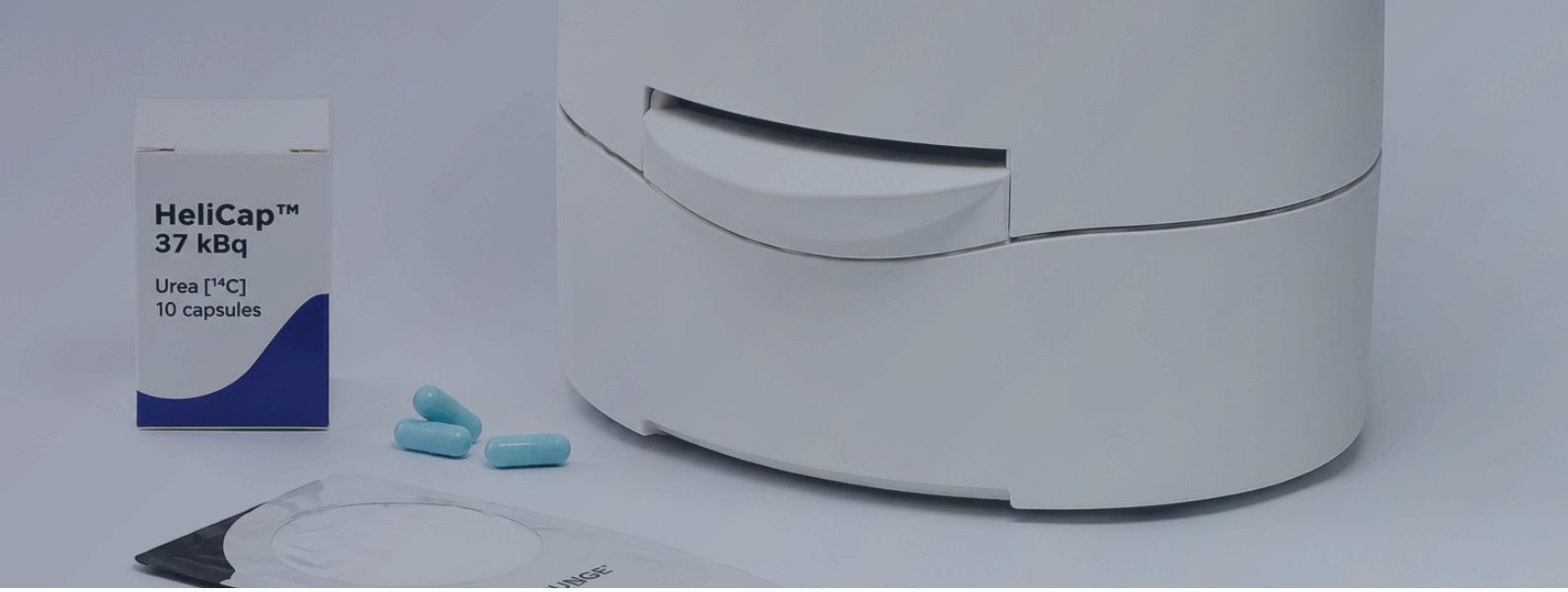


Helicobacter pylori breath testing patient information guide

This H. pylori breath testing guide contains important information about your upcoming procedure, including fasting instructions, medication restrictions, and what to expect before, during, and after your appointment at Moonee Valley Specialist Centre in Essendon.

Moonee Valley
SPECIALIST CENTRE
Gastroenterological and Related Care



What is H. pylori breath testing?

Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) breath testing is a simple, non-invasive test that detects H. pylori bacteria in the stomach.

H. pylori is a spiral-shaped bacterium that may infect the digestive tract and can contribute to stomach ulcers, inflammation, reflux symptoms, and, over time, increase the risk of gastric cancer.

The test works by detecting carbon dioxide produced when H. pylori bacteria interact with a special urea capsule swallowed during the procedure.

H. pylori breath testing may be used:

- To diagnose H. pylori infection
- To investigate symptoms such as reflux, abdominal pain, or ulcers
- To confirm successful eradication after treatment

Quick facts

Duration	Approximately 10–15 minutes
Anaesthesia	Not required
Fasting	Fasting required before the test
Recovery	No recovery time needed
Results	Usually available on the day

Important things to remember

- You must attend the test on an empty stomach.
- Certain medications can interfere with test accuracy and may need to be stopped before testing.
- Inform our team about all medications, supplements, and medical conditions before your appointment.
- H. pylori breath testing may not be suitable during pregnancy.
- A Medicare rebate may be available if you have a valid referral.

Preparation steps

Two weeks before your test

Do not take oral or intravenous antibiotics unless specifically advised to do so by your healthcare provider.

Avoid colonoscopy or enema procedures during this period, where possible.

24 hours before your test

Restrict:

- Dairy products
- Canned or dried fruits
- Fruit juice, soft drinks, and honey
- High-fibre foods such as oats, beans, and corn
- Fibre supplements and laxatives

A simple evening meal, such as rice with meat or vegetables, is recommended before fasting begins.

4–6 hours before your test

You must fast before your H. pylori breath test so your stomach is empty for accurate testing. Do not eat or drink for at least 4–6 hours before your appointment unless advised otherwise by your healthcare provider. Some patients may be instructed to fast from 9 pm the night before the procedure. Plain water may be allowed during the fasting period if instructed by our team.

Day of procedure

Do not smoke, exercise, or take restricted medications before your appointment.
Wear comfortable clothing and bring your referral, Medicare card, medications list, and healthcare documents.

Please contact us before ceasing any prescription medication. Proton pump inhibitors, antacids, antibiotics, and certain reflux medications may need to be stopped before testing, as advised by our clinical team.

What to expect

During the procedure, you will swallow a HeliCap capsule containing a small amount of Carbon-14 (C14) radiolabelled urea with water. If H. pylori bacteria are present in the stomach, they break down the urea and produce radiolabelled carbon dioxide, which can then be detected in your breath.

After approximately 10 minutes, you will be asked to breathe into a special breath card for several minutes. The sample is then analysed onsite using a detector device. Results are usually available shortly after testing and will be discussed with you by your doctor or nurse.

During the test

- The procedure is painless and does not require sedation.
- The radiolabelled urea used during the test contains a very small amount of radiation, comparable to normal daily environmental exposure.
- Most patients complete the procedure within 15 minutes.

After the test

- You may return to normal activities immediately after the test unless advised otherwise.
- If the test result is positive, your specialist may prescribe antibiotics and acid-suppressing medications to help eradicate the infection and reduce the risk of ulcers recurring.
- Some patients may require repeat testing or further treatment if the infection persists.

Risks and safety of H. pylori breath testing

- H. pylori breath testing is considered safe, non-invasive, and low risk for most patients.

- The procedure uses a very small amount of radiolabelled material to help detect H. pylori bacteria. The radiation exposure is minimal and considered comparable to normal background environmental exposure.

- Test accuracy can be affected by fasting failure, smoking, antibiotics, proton pump inhibitors (e.g., Nexium, Somac, Pariet), antacids, or reflux medications. Following all preparation instructions carefully helps improve result accuracy and reduce the likelihood of repeat testing.

- H. pylori breath testing using Carbon-14 (C14) radiolabelled urea may not be suitable during pregnancy. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or may be pregnant, please inform our healthcare team before your appointment so the most appropriate testing option can be discussed.

You must fast for at least 4–6 hours before your H. pylori breath test unless advised otherwise by your healthcare provider. Do not eat or drink during this time, as food, drinks, smoking, and certain medications may affect test accuracy and require repeat testing. Plain water may be allowed if instructed by our clinical team.



Need to reschedule or have questions?

Phone: 1300 938 148

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Address: 1003 Mt Alexander Road, Essendon VIC 3040

Scan to manage your booking

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