



Laboratory Memo

Monday July 27, 2026

Helicobacter pylori – antibody UPDATE from PHL

OUR COMMITMENT

MLW ensures the most accurate patient result in a timely manner. Patient Safety is our #1 Goal.

Background

This page provides antibody (serology) testing information for *Helicobacter pylori* at Public Health Ontario (PHO).

Alternative noninvasive *H. pylori* testing methods such as urea breath test, stool antigen, or stool PCR are not available at PHO, but may be available at other community or hospital laboratories. Invasive biopsy testing methods such as histology, rapid urease, or direct culture are also not available at PHO.

Updates

- **Effective July 22, 2026**, PHO will update the routine acceptance criteria for all *H. pylori* serology requests as per the Testing Indications below.

Testing Indications

Testing for *H. pylori* should only be considered if there is planned follow-up for treatment. The main established testing and treatment indications for *H. pylori* are¹⁻⁹:

- Peptic **ulcer** disease
- Gastric **cancer** risk (e.g., MALT, premalignancy, dysplasia, gastritis, first degree family history)
- Unexplained **dyspepsia** in adults* (i.e. epigastric pain lasting at least 1 month in the absence of predominant reflux-like symptoms)

Other indications with limited or conflicting evidence include:

- Refractory iron deficiency **anemia** after appropriate evaluation and iron supplementation
- Long-term nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (**NSAID**) use in adults*
- Idiopathic (autoimmune) thrombocytopenic **purpura** in adults*
- **Bariatric** surgery pre-operative screening in adults*
- **Household** member diagnosed with *H. pylori* by non-serological testing in adults*

The indications with an asterisk (*) are not currently supported in pediatric populations.

As per Choosing Wisely, serology is no longer a recommended primary testing method for diagnosis of active *H. pylori* infection. Instead, alternative non-invasive methods such as stool antigen or urea breath tests should be preferentially used in adults with no alarming signs. Although these alternative methods are not available at PHO, such tests may be offered at other laboratories (e.g. private or hospital laboratories). Individuals with alarming signs, as well as some pediatric populations, may warrant endoscopic evaluation as opposed to non-invasive testing.

Acceptance/Rejection Criteria

H. pylori serum samples will be **cancelled** at PHO if:

- **Received without clinical information compatible with the testing indications stated above**
- Stored refrigerated (e.g. 2-8°C) for more than 48 hours from time of collection (*H. pylori* serum samples should be frozen if delays of greater than 48 hours are expected)
- Received without date of collection specified on the requisition

Cancelled samples cannot be restored and will require a new sample submission with an appropriate indication if testing is clinically indicated.