



## **My *H. pylori* Journey**

**By Sharon Glass**

I am a 68-year-old female who has battled afib for 3 years. I found considerable relief by carefully analyzing my diet and adjusting it to provide all the nutrients I need. However, I have always been plagued with digestive problems and in November 2008 these problems came to a head.

During my research I found I had 4 of the 8 symptoms for *H.pylori* and/or an ulcer. *H. pylori* is a bacterium that inhabits various areas of the stomach and duodenum (first section of the small intestine). It causes a chronic low-level inflammation of the stomach lining and is strongly linked to the development of duodenal and gastric ulcers and stomach cancer. I learned that *H. pylori* is the only bacteria that can survive in the acidic environment of the stomach and also causes gastritis. A person infected with *H. pylori* has a two to six-fold increased risk of developing mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma, and gastric cancer compared with those uninfected.

I had too many symptoms to not consider the possibility that I had this bacteria or something worse like an ulcer or even cancer. I made an appointment with the doctor. I told him what I thought and he looked up *H.pylori* on his computer. Agreeing that I had too many symptoms to ignore, he ordered the blood test. It came back positive for the bacteria. He said the recommended treatment was two strong antibiotics (large doses) and a strong antacid for two weeks. I told him I couldn't take antibiotics as I had horrible stomach issues with them and I didn't need anything else that would interfere with my stomach. I asked him if there were any other treatments, he said not that he knew of. He stressed that I needed to take the drastic treatment, as this was one of the worst bacteria's a person can get in their system and if I hadn't already developed an ulcer I probably would. He said the worse scenario was possible stomach cancer if it were left unattended.

I went home that day with fear but more than that I was determined I would find an answer. I e-mailed Jackie (what would I do without Jackie). We started working on research together. I learned so much, even found some forums where *H.pylori* was the discussion topic. Through those forums I found that many people had taken the treatment program of antibiotics and antacids only to find it didn't work and they just got sicker, some ended up in the hospital only to be put on stronger drugs. The cure rate for *H.pylori* with the medical treatments was very low. I learned that some medical experts believed the *H.pylori* had become resistant to the recommended antibiotics.

I used a product from Allergy Research Group - *Mastica Chios Gum Mastic, Hypoallergenic, 120 vegetarian capsules*, 1000 mg per serving and I did two a day = 2000 mg. I also used *Natrol, BioBeads, Probiotic Acidophilus Complex, 90 Beads*. I believe strongly taking them together was what helped me most, along with eating healthily. If a person eats junk food I don't think the supplements have what they

need to work because the body is fighting too many toxins to focus on the H.pylori. Both products can be ordered through Hans' vitamin store at <http://www.afibbers.org/vitamins/vitamin15.htm>

Mastic Gum is a supplement that is made from a *resinous material obtained from the Pistacia lentiscus tree which is grown on the island of Chios in Greece. It is traditionally used as a health food in Greece.* I learned that a recent study to the "New England Journal of Medicine" supports mastic's contribution to gastrointestinal health. I read mostly good reports about the supplement and that some people had been able to kill the bacteria with it. I finally told my family members including my sons and my sisters and brother about the doctors confirmed diagnosis and what he had recommended and what I had decided to do. Out of concern my family pushed me to take the antibiotics, I knew I couldn't and hated seeing the obvious disappointment and concern in their faces and voices when I told them, but knew I had to do what was best for me and my body.

I started taking the Mastic Gum capsules on Monday April 6. I took 1000 mg every twelve hours consistently along with a good probiotic and lots of water. I had read that the bacteria did not like broccoli so I ate it once or twice a day for the full 60-day treatment with the Mastic Gum. I love broccoli so eating it that often was no problem. My philosophy was that if the bug hated broccoli, then the more the better! I later learned there is actually a supplement made out of broccoli that I could have taken, but then I would have missed the good taste of the vegetable.

I tolerated the supplement well and within a week, my food was no longer being flushed through my system. Two weeks later the pain in my stomach had lessened. It had been so bad that eating food made me double over in pain, now I could eat without the extreme pain. I was still diligent in eating my "afib tolerant" foods as I sure didn't want to deal with that and H.pylori.

One month into the treatment I woke up with a horrible metallic taste in my mouth. Nothing I did seemed to make it go away, I felt as if I had sucked on a metal Popsicle. Concerned that I had developed a reaction to the supplement, I researched "metallic taste in mouth". I found that often antibiotics would cause this taste when bacteria die and the body flushes it out through the tongue. I called a friend who is our local natural health person and asked him if he thought the Mastic Gum might work the same way if it was killing the bacteria. He said, "Absolutely, sounds like the bug is dying." I was excited to say the least, and glad I was taking a good probiotic so the supplement didn't kill off the good bacteria too. I didn't want to shout from the roof top that the bug was dead until I had a confirmed stool test, but I sure felt like it.

By the end of May all symptoms had disappeared, I felt wonderful, no stomach pain, my bowels were back to normal and the persistent muscle pain I had experienced for months was gone. In April I had lost to 103 lbs and my weight was now steady at 105 pounds. I knew that being underweight was not a good thing for my body and I needed to gain more weight. I introduced some usually forbidden carbs into my diet; I needed calories as I wasn't even getting the RDA daily. I ate gluten free pretzels with a good peanut butter every day. I put Olive Oil on everything, even sautéed a banana in it one day which I don't recommend...nasty! I added rice noodles and other non-gluten foods. I anticipated getting pain again and was even prepared to face an episode of afib caused by too many carbs. I was relieved when I had no pain and better than that...no afib. I realized that my heart had been so quiet through all of the ups and downs of this trial. I checked my afib diary and discovered that I had been having afib every two months from March of 2008 until January 27, 2009. It was encouraging at how quiet my heart had been since the 3 hours episode in January.

One of the most important pieces of information that I discovered while researching H.pylori is the below article indicating that H.pylori could be a factor in afib.

**Gastric bug link to irregular heart rhythm, atrial fibrillation 16 Jun 2005**

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=26239#>

*A common stomach bug may also be linked to the development of irregular heart rhythm, also known as atrial fibrillation, suggests a small study in Heart. The bug in question, Helicobacter pylori, causes ulcers, and has also been implicated in the development of stomach cancer and ischaemic heart disease. The researchers base their findings on 59 patients with persistent atrial fibrillation. The patients included those who had no structural heart disease. All the patients were given a battery of tests, including a heart*

*tracing, and levels of C reactive protein, an indicator of systemic inflammation. They were also directly tested for the presence of H pylori. The results were compared with those from a group of 45 healthy volunteers in whom the same tests were carried out. Both groups were similar in terms of age and levels of blood fats, although significantly more of the patients with atrial fibrillation were being treated for high blood pressure. The patients with atrial fibrillation were around 20 times as likely to test positive for H pylori as the healthy volunteers, and their levels of C reactive protein were around five times as high. Both rates of H pylori and C reactive protein levels were also significantly higher among those patients with persistent atrial fibrillation than those with spasmodic episodes of irregular heart rhythm. H pylori is a very resilient bacterium and has properties that enable it to escape detection by the immune system, say the authors. And chronic gastritis, caused by persistent H pylori infection, may predispose to atrial fibrillation, they suggest.*

For a detailed discussion of this report please see Conference Room Session 42 at <http://www.afibbers.org/conference/session42.pdf>

To make a long story short I finished the 60-day treatment on June 6<sup>th</sup> and took a stool sample to the lab on June 16, 2009, two months after taking the Mastic Gum. I felt the bacteria was dead, but reserved stating it until I had confirmation. My doctor went out of town for a week and I went on vacation before the results came back. I got a call when I got back from vacation that the test was back. I didn't want to hear the results over the phone, so I went to the doctor's office. The nurse came out in the waiting room with the results in her hand. She sat down and I felt fear in the pit of my stomach, I thought she would say it is still positive. She said, "Sharon, I have good news, the test was negative." I almost ran around the waiting room, but contained my excitement. She asked, "What did you use?" I said, "A natural supplement called Mastic Gum." I explained what it was and told her I knew the doctor was skeptical about the outcome. She handed me the paper and said, "Well, now you have the proof." I walked out of the office as if I were on air. It was time to shout it from the roof top and I vowed I would tell everyone who will listen that if you have afib and stomach problems, get checked for H.pylori, if it is negative, get checked for Candida.

Am I cured of afib? I will reserve that statement until more time has passed. Will I continue my afib protocol? You bet I will... I'm healthier than I have been in years and have gained back to 111 lbs. My hope is that more research will be done on the connection between afib and H.pylori and that doctors will try something natural instead of making people sicker with strong antibiotics that don't appear to have good results. Maybe my story will help doctors consider other options and if they won't, people will take their health back into their own hands. Like many of us I believe there is a major connection between afib and inflammation and I won't stop telling my story, maybe someone will listen...how about you?

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