



Microbes and your body

Your body is home to trillions of microbes. You would not be able to live without them.

You can't live without microbes. There are trillions of them inside your body and on your skin.

Here is how to find some of the microbes that call your body home. Run your tongue over your teeth before you clean them. You should feel a film on your teeth (Picture 1). This is a slime produced by microbes. But they are not just on your teeth – they are on your tongue, the inside of your mouth and all over your skin. Don't worry – they are not going to eat you alive, and many of them are extremely useful.

▼ (Picture 1) This special dentist's dye shows how many bacteria remain on teeth even after they have been cleaned. It is impossible to get rid of all bacteria, but a small number are not harmful.



Slimy teeth

The slimy coating that develops on your teeth is made by bacteria. They make the slimy coating as they digest any food that may be left in your mouth and on your teeth. They especially relish sugary substances. At the same time, they release an acid, and this acid can eat away at your teeth, cause tooth decay and give you bad breath.

The longer you go between teeth brushing, the thicker the film of bacterial slime becomes.

You can never get rid of all of the microbes by brushing your teeth, but you can keep them under control.

Good digestion

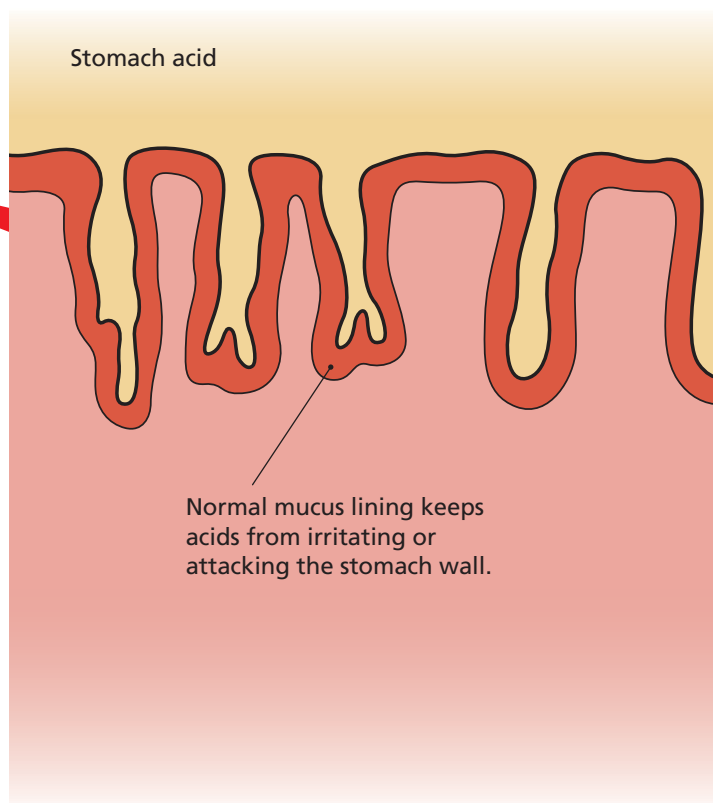
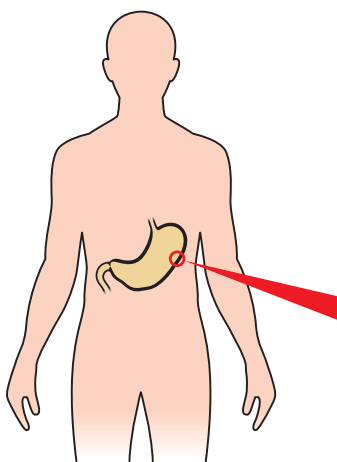
Another place where you find microbes is in your gut, the long tube that goes down

from your stomach and makes up most of your insides (Picture 2).

More microbes live in here than anywhere else in your body. Their job is to break down the food you eat and release substances which your body can use for food and **ENERGY**.

► (Picture 2) How stomach ulcers are caused.

If the balance of microbes in your gut is disturbed in some way, you get ‘stomach ache’, perhaps **DIARRHOEA**, and even a fever, until the right balance of microbes occurs.

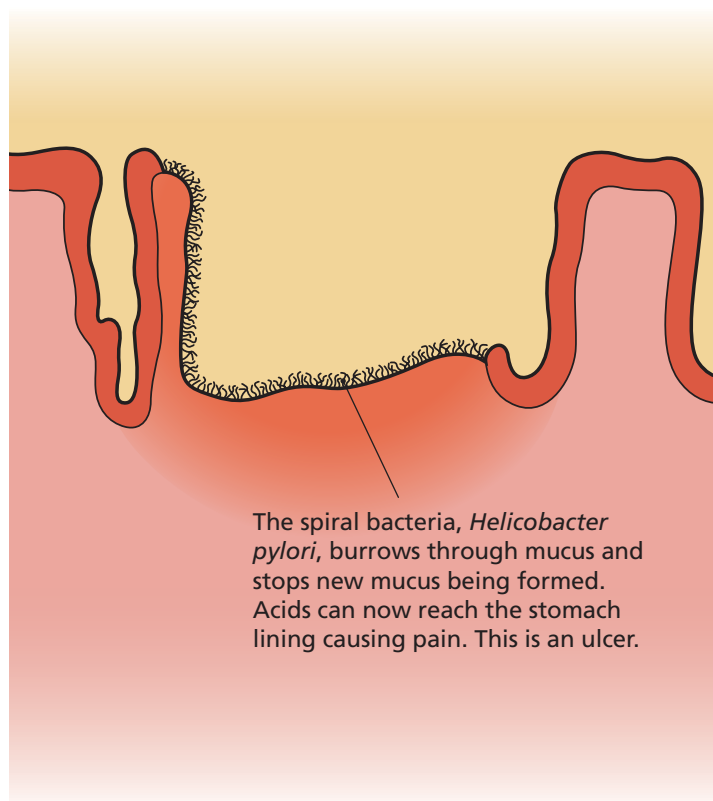


Infection

An **INFECTION** happens when a microbe that can be harmful starts growing. This can release poisons inside you, or destroy and change your healthy body cells. The result is that you can feel ill. These kinds of microbes have to be destroyed – which is the point of many **MEDICINES**.

Infection fighters

Although they are invisible to us, our bodies are covered with microbes. By covering us, these microbes help protect us from germs. Microbes fight the germs for space in and on our bodies. As a result, germs often only have the room to increase in numbers and do us harm if other microbes are weakened.



Summary

- You have microbes inside your body and on your skin.
- Microbes help you to digest your food.
- Microbes on your teeth can cause tooth decay.