

# Gastroscopy Patient Information

This leaflet explains more about your gastroscopy and what you can expect when you come to hospital. It also details the instructions on how to prepare for this test, including when to stop eating and what tablets you may need to stop. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

## What is gastroscopy?

Gastroscopy is a camera examination via the mouth to the inside of the stomach. This can help to find the cause of your abdominal symptoms and to diagnose and treat diseases of the upper intestine. The procedure itself takes five to ten minutes but please allow two to three hours in the hospital for the whole process to be completed. The procedure is tolerated by many without sedation, however if you prefer a mild sedative please ensure you read the section below under "What happens after the gastroscopy".

## What are the risks?

The procedure is very safe, but very rarely there can be a problem, for example:

- The sedative can affect your breathing making it slow and shallow.
- There is a small risk of missing some abnormalities. It is very rare to miss cancer.
- When a biopsy is taken there may be bleeding on rare occasions.
- Perforation, which is a tear in the wall of the upper intestine is also very rare (< 1:2,500 risk). If this happens it would require a short stay in hospital including treatment with antibiotics and possibly surgical repair.

## Are there any alternatives?

For some conditions it may be possible to perform a CT scan. The disadvantage of this is that in many cases it is not so good at detecting disease and that a biopsy cannot be taken. The radiation involved in a CT scan is unsuitable for some patients.

## If my symptoms have stopped should I still come for the test?

**Yes.** It is important that you still come for the gastroscopy. Your doctor has organised this test to ensure you have no problems in your stomach. Although the symptoms may have gone, it remains important to perform the examination.

## How can I prepare for gastroscopy?

- A clear view of the stomach is required for this examination to be successful and so it must be as empty as possible. It is vitally important to follow the advice given about preparation. This is detailed below.
- **PLEASE DO NOT EAT FOR SIX HOURS BEFORE THE TEST.** You are allowed to drink clear fluids (no milk) up until two hours before the procedure.
- If you are diabetic or taking warfarin, or blood thinning medications such as apixaban, rivaroxaban, dabigatran, clopidogrel, ticagrelor or prasugrel, please call us on 020 8725 1913.

- Take other medications as normal.
- Please bring a list of your regular medications and any inhalers or sprays with you.

## Advice for diabetic patients

The period of starvation can upset your diabetes temporarily. Please contact us on 020 8725 1913 for further specific advice about your diabetes. Alternatively you may wish to contact your diabetic nurse.

## On arrival at the endoscopy unit

- A nurse will check your details, including medications and allergies
- The test will be explained again and you will be asked to sign a consent form
- St George's is a national training centre for endoscopy. Students and qualified trainees may be involved in your care. If you do not want students to be present please inform the doctor or nurse when you are admitted.

## Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

## What happens during gastroscopy?

- A local anaesthetic spray is used to numb the back of your throat; this has a slightly bitter taste. The effect lasts approximately 30 minutes.
- A sedative injection is offered. It makes you relaxed but usually not asleep. It can in some patients affect memory of the procedure. Many patients choose not to have the sedation as the test is usually easily tolerated.
- The gastroscope is gently inserted via your mouth into your stomach. This is not painful and will not make breathing or swallowing difficult, but you may feel uncomfortable during the test and it can make you gag. Careful continued slow breathing (through mouth or nose) may alleviate any discomfort. The nurse may need to clear saliva from your mouth using a small suction tube. If you gag you won't vomit as your stomach will be empty. The test takes approximately five minutes.
- A biopsy is usually taken during this test. You cannot usually feel this.

## Will I feel any pain?

You may feel some discomfort from the air that is pumped into the stomach. It should not hurt.

## What happens after gastroscopy?

Following the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area. If you have had sedation you will be monitored for 45 minutes. After this you will be able to get dressed and have refreshments.

If you have sedation you will not be allowed to drive home and must arrange for someone to accompany you home. The medication given during the test will prohibit you from driving for 24 hours after the examination. If you are unable to arrange transportation or do not wish to take public transport we can arrange a taxi to take you home, however you are responsible for the fare. You will need a responsible adult at home for at least 12 hours. A nurse will give you a copy of the endoscopy report as well as some important discharge advice.

## Where do I go?

Please attend the Endoscopy Unit, St George's Hospital, First floor, St James' Wing, Blackshaw Road, London, SW17 0QT.

## Is there parking at the hospital?

There is a car park with the entrance located on Blackshaw Road. Please ensure you check the rates before parking.

## Results / Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Upon completion of the gastroscopy the findings will be discussed with you. We will be able to tell you of any visual findings, however any samples will be sent to the laboratory for testing.

This can take up to three weeks. The report will be sent to your referring doctor and your GP. If required, a follow up appointment will be sent to you through the post.

## Useful sources of information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gastroscopy> for further explanation about gastroscopy.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your gastroscopy, you can call the Endoscopy department on **020 8725 1913 / 1491** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

