

# PATIENT INFORMATION: UPPER GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) ENDOSCOPY

## Diagnosing Problems of the Upper Digestive Tract without Surgery:

Your doctor has advised you to have an upper **endoscopy**, a nonsurgical procedure that can help your doctor diagnose your digestive problem. This routine exam allows your doctor to see directly inside your upper GI (gastrointestinal) tract. Based on the results of your exam, your doctor can determine the best course of action for treating or managing the cause of your problem.

## Through the looking glass:

Your doctor examines the lining of your upper digestive tract by looking through an **endoscope**. This state-of-the-art instrument, consisting of a camera lens and a thin, flexible tube, contains thread-like fibres of glass that beam light and send images back to a processor. Endoscopes use computer technology, which produces an enlarged view of your upper digestive tract on a television screen. We can take pictures or images of your procedure for further study.

## Viewing Your Problem:

Your upper digestive tract, which includes your **esophagus**, **stomach**, and **duodenum**, normally has a smooth lining. If during your endoscopy your

doctor sees an abnormality such as an area of inflammation, a growth, or ulceration, your doctor will take further steps to diagnose and treat your condition. A **biopsy** (tissue sample) can provide additional information to help your doctor treat your condition.

## Preparing for Endoscopy:

Stop eating solid food at midnight the night before your surgery. You may have clear fluids (black tea, apple juice or water) only up until three hours before your scheduled arrival time. Do not chew gum or tobacco.

You will not be allowed to drive yourself home. You will be sedated during the exam so you must arrange for a ride home prior to coming to the Hospital.

## Tell Your Doctor If:

- You know you're allergic to certain medications
- You know you take medications such as aspirin that can thin the blood
- You have heart or lung problems
- You're being treated for a medical condition.

You will be sedated for this procedure by an anaesthetist.

**For health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse,  
call Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000**

## During Endoscopy:

Before your procedure, a plastic mouth piece will be placed between your teeth to prevent you from biting on the scope. You will then be asked to swallow a narrow, flexible endoscope tube. This is much easier than most people expect. To give your doctor a clear view, air will be used to temporarily expand your upper GI tract. The endoscope causes little discomfort. Depending on what your doctor sees, your doctor may be able to treat the problem immediately, or a biopsy may be taken. If the doctor sees a narrowing in your esophagus, or if you have been having difficulty swallowing solid foods and the physician determines that you need to be “dilated”, it simply means having your esophagus stretched by passing a “bougie” – a rubber tube of varying diameters through the esophagus until the opening is large enough to relieve the symptoms. When the exam is over, usually within 15-30 minutes, you'll be taken to the Recovery Room where you will be monitored if you have received sedation. If no sedation was used, you will be discharged when you determine you feel well enough.

## After Endoscopy:

When you return home, you should be able to resume some of your usual activities. You will be able to eat and

drink immediately following procedure once you are awake and stable. You may have a mild sore throat for about 24 hours, particularly if you have been dilated. Burping can help relieve the bloated feeling caused by the use of air during endoscopy. You can usually return to all routines, including driving and working in 24 hours.

## Risks Associated with Upper GI Endoscopy Include:

- Abnormal reaction to sedatives
- Bleeding from biopsy
- Accidental puncture of the upper GI tract

Patients who experience any of the following rare symptoms after upper GI endoscopy should contact their doctor immediately:

- Swallowing difficulties
- Throat, chest, and abdominal pain that worsens
- Vomiting
- Bloody or very dark stool
- Fever

## Your Results:

If your problem was treated during the exam, your doctor may give you special instructions to follow. If a biopsy was performed, allow several weeks for the results. If necessary, further studies or treatments may be recommended.

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