

GASTROSCOPY

WHAT IS A GASTROSCOPY?

A gastroscopy is a medical exam which allows a doctor to look directly inside your upper digestive tract (oesophagus, stomach and duodenum) so as to identify the possible causes of stomach complaints. Where necessary, a gastroscopy also enables tissue samples to be taken in a simple and painless manner, for subsequent laboratory testing.

A gastroscope is a flexible tube (with a small camera at one end) which is introduced through the mouth into the oesophagus, and then guided into the stomach.

IS IT PAINFUL?

In general, the procedure is not painful, though it may cause some discomfort.

If needed, conscious sedation can be performed (usually benzodiazepine administration)

WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE EXAM

No special preparation is needed prior to the gastroscopy, though you should not eat for at least 8 hours before the exam.

Where necessary, you can continue taking oral medication, swallowing the tablets with a little water. In any case, please inform your doctor in advance of any medical conditions you have and any medications you take regularly.

THE PROCEDURE

Before the exam, you will need to remove spectacles and dentures. You will then be asked to lie down on the examining table on your side. To protect your teeth and stop you biting the gastroscope, a special plastic mouth guard will be inserted into your mouth.

If necessary, during the gastroscopy air will be blown down the tube to relax the walls of your stomach; the procedure may cause some discomfort. The exam usually takes only a few minutes.

Complications from a gastroscopy performed for purely diagnostic purposes are very rare (in 4 patients out of every 1000).

Where necessary, the gastroscopy may be used to provide therapy; for example, the doctor may remove ingested objects, dilate strictures, or stop bleeding caused by ulcers.

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE EXAM

After the exam, you will be left to rest for a few minutes, and then you can return home.

You may feel some abdominal bloatedness after the exam, which will go away after a few hours. After the exam you can eat as you please.

In any case, your doctor will inform you of all you need to know.

If after the exam you have abdominal pain, or you have darkened faeces, contact the centre where the gastroscopy was performed immediately.

The medication used to reduce discomfort during the exam may make you feel light-headed and slow down your reflexes, so it is important that you are accompanied by a person you trust who can take you home. For this same reason, for the rest of the day, you should avoid making important decisions and operating machinery that requires high levels of concentration.