

Endoscopy

An endoscopy is an examination of your esophagus, stomach, or small intestine. This test helps your doctor find the cause of the problem you are having with your esophagus, stomach, or duodenum.

Before the Endoscopy

Your stomach must be *completely empty* during the endoscopy. ***Do not eat or drink anything for eight hours before your endoscopy.*** If you take heart or blood pressure pills you can take them with a few sips of water one to two hours before your appointment.

If you have diabetes, do not take your insulin before the exam unless you are told to do so. You may be asked what your morning blood sugar reading was. When you get to the GI Clinic on the third floor, tell the clerk that you have diabetes.

If you have any questions, you will have time to ask the doctor. S/he will ask you some questions about your symptoms and medication allergies. You will then be asked to sign a consent form. This form gives the doctor your permission to do the endoscopy.

You will be given a medication to help you relax. Because of this, ***a competent adult must come to the appointment with you and drive you home after your endoscopy. If you come in a county van you must also bring a competent adult with you who can come to the appointment with you and then drive you home from the van drop off site.***

You will not be able to drive until the day after your appointment. The endoscopy will not be done if you do not bring a competent adult with you.

During the Endoscopy

You will lie on an exam table on your left side. You may be given medication through a vein in your arm. This helps you relax and makes swallowing easier. This medication will not put you to sleep. Your mouth may be sprayed with a medication to numb your throat. This medication will not affect your breathing.

An endoscope, a small flexible tube, will be inserted through your mouth and into your esophagus and stomach. You may feel a slight amount of gagging while the tube passes through the back of your throat. This feeling goes away once the tube enters your esophagus. When the tube enters your stomach, you may feel some bloating. This feeling goes away as soon as the tube is withdrawn.

In some cases, a biopsy (a tiny bit of tissue) is taken. This tissue is studied under a microscope. Biopsy results are available in 24 to 48 hours. This written report is available in five to seven days.

The endoscopy usually takes 10 to 20 minutes. The doctor who does the endoscopy will tell you the results. S/he will send a detailed report to your doctor, who will decide on your treatment.

After the Endoscopy

You may feel drowsy. You will need to stay in the clinic for at least 30 minutes after the exam. You must have a responsible adult with you to help you after the exam and to be with you when you leave the clinic.

The effects of the numbing medication that was sprayed on your throat will go away in one hour. Then you can safely return to your regular diet and medications. You may have a mild sore for the rest of the day. Ice chips or cough drops may help relieve the soreness.

It is unusual to have problems after an endoscopy but it is important for you to recognize the warning signs of a possible complication.

If you have any of these problems:

- Black or bloody bowel movements
- Abdominal cramps
- Increased pain or problems swallowing
- Severe chest pain
- Vomiting blood or a dark coffee ground-like material

call one of the phone numbers in the next section.

Phone Numbers:

For urgent questions/concerns call:

Telephone Care

Monday – Friday

7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

(612) 725-2242

1-866-414-5058, extension 2242 (toll free)

VA Nurse Help Line

Weekdays after 4:00 p.m., weekends, and holidays

1-866-687-7382 (toll free)

For non-urgent questions about your endoscopy call:

GI Procedure Clinic

Monday – Friday

7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

(612) 467-3537

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VA Medical Center

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