



Dorset HealthCare  
University  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Gastroscopy

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Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

Excellence  
Compassion  
Expertise

A blue heart-shaped logo containing the text 'Excellence', 'Compassion', and 'Expertise' stacked vertically. 'Excellence' is in yellow, 'Compassion' is in white, and 'Expertise' is in orange.

## Introduction

You have been advised by your GP or hospital doctor to have a gastroscopy examination. **We will need to have your formal consent before we can carry out this examination.** This booklet explains how the examination is carried out, and what the risks are. This will help you to make an informed decision when agreeing to the examination and whether you wish to have a sedative. The consent form is included with your admission paperwork. Please read it carefully.

## What is a gastroscopy (upper GI endoscopy)?

A gastroscopy, or upper GI endoscopy, is a test which allows the doctor to look directly at the lining of the oesophagus (the gullet), the stomach and around the first bend of the small intestine — the duodenum. The endoscope is a long flexible tube (thinner than your little finger) with a bright light at the end, that is passed through your mouth into the stomach. The doctor can check whether or not any disease is present by looking at the image on the TV screen. If your stomach looks inflamed, a small sample of tissue will be taken, painlessly, through the endoscope. This may be tested, while you wait, for the bacteria that can cause ulcers; or it may be sent to the laboratory for other tests.

## Preparing for the procedure

To allow a clear view, the stomach must be empty. **You will therefore be asked not to have anything to eat for 6 hours before the test. You may drink clear fluids for a further 3 hours before the test. Then nil by mouth.**

Soon after you arrive, you will be reviewed or seen by a nurse, who will ask you a few questions about your medical condition and any past surgery or illness you have had.

The nurse will record your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels. If you are diabetic, your blood glucose will also be recorded.

The nurse will also make sure you understand the examination, and you will be able to ask any further questions or raise any concerns you may have. The nurse will ask again for your consent to the procedure.

Please note there is limited space in the waiting room for relatives.

It will be necessary for you to remove any false teeth. This may be done in the examination room, where they will be kept safely until after the examination.

You do not need to get changed for the procedure. Please leave your jewellery at home.

In the examination room you will be made comfortable on a couch. Anaesthetic spray will be sprayed to the back of the throat, before resting on your left side.

## Will I feel anything during the gastroscopy?

The procedure is performed using an anaesthetic spray to numb your throat, or an injection to make you sleepy (sedation). This is your choice, please think about it before you arrive for your procedure. **Please note:** if you are having sedation **you must** have somebody to collect and stay with you for at least 12 hours.

## Anaesthetic spray

- Allows you to stay awake, enabling you to talk to the doctor about your results immediately after the gastroscopy.
- Allows you to recover quickly.
- Permits you to go home without delay.
- Permits you to drive home after the procedure.
- The spray may take up to 45 minutes to wear off.

## Side effects of the anaesthetic spray

- Using anaesthetic spray in the mouth and throat may make swallowing difficult due to loss of feeling. This may increase the risk of something going down the wrong way for an hour or so afterwards. We ask you to delay drinking for 1 hour post procedure
- Side effects are rare and usually occur with high doses. The nurse will discuss these with you.

## Sedation (injection)

- Sedation is given via a small needle placed in a vein.
- It will make you drowsy and sleepy, but not unconscious.
- It will make you less anxious.
- You will take longer to recover if sedation is given. It may take up to 2 hours before you feel well enough to go home.
- You may not remember anything about the procedure.

## After sedation

- You will need an adult to take you home and stay with you for 12 hours afterwards.
- You will not be able to drive home or take public transport.
- You must not operate machinery for 24 hours afterwards.
- You must not sign any legal documents for 24 hours afterwards.
- You should be aware that sedation may stay in the body for 2-3 days and can cause tiredness.
- We recommend you do not drink alcohol for 24 hours.

## During the gastroscopy

If you are having local anaesthetic (throat spray), this will be sprayed onto the back of your throat whilst you are sitting up. You will quickly notice a loss of sensation to your tongue and throat. To keep your mouth slightly open, a plastic mouthpiece will be put gently between your teeth. When the endoscope is passed into your stomach it is unlikely to cause you any pain, nor will it interfere with your breathing at any time. It may routinely take up to 5 minutes to examine all of the areas of the stomach carefully.

Your pulse and oxygen levels are monitored continuously. If you get a lot of saliva in your mouth, the nurse will clear it using a small suction tube (similar to the dentist). When the examination is finished, the tube is removed quickly and easily.

Sometimes a biopsy (a sample of tissue) will be taken for laboratory analysis, with tiny forceps. You may feel a tugging sensation, but only very rarely is this uncomfortable.

## What are the risks?

This procedure is safe and complications are rare.

The possible complications are:

- **Perforation** — This is where the area being examined is damaged by the endoscope or biopsy forceps. If this happened we would keep you in hospital for monitoring and treatment.
- **Lung/breathing problems** — Saliva or gastric juices can be breathed into the lung. This is prevented by the nurse using a small suction tube to remove any secretions in your mouth.
- **Bleeding after biopsy**

## After the procedure

The local anaesthetic may take up to one hour to wear off. Please do not take anything by mouth for one hour after the procedure.

The back of your throat may be sore for the rest of the day. There may be mild abdominal discomfort.

## When will I know the result?

In many cases the doctor will be able to tell you the results straight after the test. If a sample (biopsy) has been taken for examination, the results may take 2-3 weeks. You should arrange to see your GP to discuss details of the results and any necessary treatment.

## Medication

Please continue to take your normal medication, unless told to stop by your GP or the hospital.

## Further advice

If you would like any further information or if you experience any problems within the first 24 hours after your appointment please contact:

Day Surgery Unit Swanage Hospital	01929 475008
Admissions office 9am-4pm	01929 475047
Minor injuries 8am-8pm	01929 475009

You could also contact your GP

## Dorset Out of Hours Medical Service on 111

Poole Hospital A+E 01202 442202 (out of Hours)

**Emergency 999**

## Useful websites

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)—information on tests and procedures

## Frequently asked questions

**Q: Why do I need a gastroscopy?**

A: You have been advised to have a gastroscopy to try and find the cause of your symptoms. The results will help us to decide on the best treatment for your problem, or whether we need to carry out any further examinations.

A gastroscopy may be advised for a number of reasons, including: indigestion, anaemia, losing weight without trying to, vomiting, blood in your stools, passing black stools, vomiting blood, difficulty swallowing, abdominal pain or a lump in your upper abdomen.

**Q: When can I start drinking and eating again?**

A: You will be given small sips of water before you leave the day surgery unit, to ensure your swallowing reflex has returned. You have to wait one hour after having your throat spray before returning to your normal diet.

**Q: Will I be sick?**

A: You will be asked to starve for at least six hours prior to admission, this prevents any sickness.

**Q: Will I be aware of the procedure if I have sedation?**

A: Yes, you may be aware, as the sedation will not make you unconscious like a general anaesthetic would, it will just make you feel sleepy and relaxed.

**Q: Are there any alternatives to a gastroscopy?**

A: It may be possible to have a barium swallow or meal x-ray. However, this could be less accurate and actually more time consuming than a gastroscopy. If appropriate please discuss this with your GP.

**Q: How long will I be in the hospital for?**

A: This will depend on whether you choose to have sedation. The nurse will advise you on your admission. If you choose to have sedation you may be in hospital for 3-4 hours, or longer if there is no one to take you home.

# How to find Swanage Hospital

Swanage Community Hospital

Queens Road

Swanage

Dorset

BH19 2ES



**By road:** The Sandbanks to Studland chain ferry can be used if you are coming from the Bournemouth and Poole area. On-road parking is available outside the hospital on Queens Road.

**By bus:** The Bus Depot in the centre of Swanage is the nearest stop, approximately a 10 minute uphill walk to the hospital. A taxi rank is also located at the Bus Depot.

**By rail:** Wareham station is the nearest mainline service.

The information in this leaflet is available in additional languages and alternative formats. Please contact the Trust for further details.

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**Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust**

Sentinel House  
4–6 Nuffield Road  
Poole, Dorset  
BH17 0RB  
☎ 01202 277000

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🌐 [www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk)