

Gastroscopy

What is a Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

It is a procedure where a long flexible tube with a camera attached to one end, known as a gastroscope, is used to examine the digestive tract. The camera is used to take pictures of the body's organs which are then projected onto the screen or monitor it is attached to. The gastroscope is passed through the mouth, throat, oesophagus and stomach as well as part of the small intestine. During this procedure a doctor examines the lining of the upper part of your gastrointestinal tract.

Why is a gastroscopy recommended

It is a very useful procedure to understand various ailments affecting the digestive system. Doctors recommend a gastroscopy for the following ailments:

- unusual pain in the stomach;
- ulcers in the stomach;
- problems swallowing and
- unusual bleeding of the digestive tract.

What preparation must a patient do before a gastroscopy

A patient must fast for about 6 to 8 hours prior to the procedure.



Gastroscopy cont



How is the procedure performed

A gastroscopy is safe and painless, however the patient may feel some discomfort during the procedure. Local anaesthesia or general sedation may be offered to the patient by the doctor. A local anaesthetic is sprayed into the patient's mouth and the patient is asked to lie on his or her left side. The patient does not have to be afraid that his or her breathing will be hampered in any way during the procedure. If necessary instruments will be used to take samples for biopsies.

What will happen after the procedure

Following the procedure the patient will be asked to rest for about an hour. It is very rare that the patient will need to stay overnight at a hospital. However it is important that the patient is accompanied by a friend or family member to drive the patient home following the procedure. The reason for this is that the patient may feel a little dazed due to the sedation. Once the patient has recovered from the anaesthesia he or she may eat normally. The doctor's prescription regarding medication and diet should be followed to improve and restore health.

References: Healthplus 24 team. 2012. What is Gastrointestinal Endoscopy? [Online]. Available from: <http://www.healthplus24.com/diseases/digestive-health/gastrointestinal-endoscopy.aspx> [Accessed 21 January 2013].

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