



A guide to...

Having a Gastroscopy and Banding of Varices

Patient Information

How to contact us

Endoscopy departments

Watford 01923 236095

If you need an interpreter, please contact the endoscopy bookings team

If you are taking blood thinning medications such as warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabigatran, rivaroxaban or apixaban, please call the department on the number on your appointment letter to notify us.

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Ratified / Review Date	Aug 2022 / Aug 2025
ID Number	25-2036-V7



What is a Gastroscopy?

Gastroscopy is an investigation that allows us to look directly at your gullet (oesophagus), stomach and the upper part of the intestine. A long flexible camera is passed through your mouth, down the back of your throat into your stomach. Through this tube we will be able to look for any abnormalities that may be present. If necessary, small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken during the examination for laboratory analysis.

What are varices?

Varices are enlarged veins which are a little like varicose veins that some people have on their legs. They are often caused by liver diseases but can have other causes as well. They are important to treat because they carry a risk of bleeding.

What is variceal banding?

It is possible to reduce the risk of bleeding from the varices by destroying them. One way of doing this is by applying rubber bands to the varices. A flexible telescope (gastroscope) is passed down into your gullet or stomach with a special device attached to the tip of the telescope. This device contains several rubber bands that can be used to capture the protruding veins and 'destroy' them, thus reducing the risk of bleeding. It may take more than one treatment to ensure that the varices are adequately destroyed.

What are the benefits?

Banding will greatly reduce the risk of bleeding from the enlarged veins and following several treatments can obliterate them altogether.

Preparation

This procedure must be done on an empty stomach. If you have a morning appointment you must not eat anything after midnight the night before but can drink sips of water up to 6.30 am on the morning of the procedure. If you have an afternoon appointment you must not eat anything after 7 am but can drink sips of water up to 11.30 am.

If you are taking diabetic medication, you can contact your GP or nurse specialist for advice. If you are taking **Aspirin**, please stop these four days before your appointment. **If you are taking blood thinning tablets (warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabigatran, rivaroxaban or apixaban) please contact the department immediately.**

Please make sure you bring with you a list of all medications you are currently taking. The procedure is usually done with sedation.

Having Sedation

This test is usually done with sedation. This means that you will be made drowsy while you have the test. Sedation will be given to you through a small tube in a vein in your arm or hand. With this type of sedation, it will be necessary for you to stay in the unit for a while afterwards. It is essential that you arrange for a responsible person to escort you home after the test. Failure to make these arrangements may result in the investigation being cancelled. Because of the lingering effects of the drugs used it is important that, for the next 24 hours, you have someone to stay with you, you do not drive, return to work, operate machinery, sign any legal documents, or drink alcohol.

Please note you will be in the department for approximately three hours in total. Your escort may like to ring the department on the telephone number overleaf before coming to collect you. Please ask them to ring two hours after your appointment time so a collection time can be agreed.

What will happen?

When you arrive the doctor or nurse will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign the consent form, giving us your permission to have the procedure performed. You will be taken into the investigation room on a trolley and asked to lay in a comfortable position on your left-hand side.

Afterwards

We will want you to have a drink before you leave the unit to check that you have no problems with your swallowing. Because of the sedation you will need to try and rest for a short while before going home. For some time afterwards you may find that you have a sore throat. This is quite normal and may be eased by drinking water. You should eat a soft diet for 24 hours then you may eat normally.

When will I get the results of the procedure?

The doctor or nurse will talk to you at the end of the procedure explaining what has been found. The results of any biopsies will take several days to be processed and your GP will receive the results approximately two weeks after your appointment. It may then be necessary for us to arrange an outpatient appointment for you.

Are there any risks?

There is a risk of causing significant bleeding which can occur in less than five in every 100 patients. This may necessitate blood transfusion or further procedures to stop the bleeding. There is a risk of causing a tear (perforation) in the gullet or stomach with the camera. This risk is exceedingly small and can occur in 1 in 2000 cases. Very rarely, scarring of the gullet where the bands have been applied may cause a narrowing of the gullet. This can occur many months after the procedure. If you have trouble in swallowing, occasionally a further procedure to stretch the narrowed gullet may be required. If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your doctor or a member of the team before you are due to have this treatment.

Are there any alternatives?

Banding of varices is the best and safest treatment if they have been bleeding or the doctor is trying to prevent them from bleeding. In severe or exceptional cases there are more complicated alternatives, which you can discuss with your doctor.

What happens if I decide not to have a gastroscopy and banding of varices?

Your doctor may not be able to treat the cause of your problem or prevent serious harm to your health in the future. If you decide not to have a gastroscopy and banding of your varices, you should discuss this carefully with your doctor.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

Please do not hesitate to telephone the department on 01923 436095 for Watford General Hospital (Monday to Friday, 8.00 am– 6.00 pm).

After the investigation if you experience severe chest or tummy pain, swelling in the neck or shortness of breath please attend your nearest Accident and Emergency department, do not drive.

- Accident and Emergency at Watford on 01923 217 256
- Please note: there is NO Accident and Emergency at Hemel Hempstead or St Albans hospitals.

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01923 217187 or email westherts.pals@nhs.net

