



# A guide to...

## Having a Gastroscopy and Banding of Varices *Patient Information*

### How to contact us

Booking and interpreting queries – Please call the number on your appointment letter

Clinical queries – Watford 01923 436095

Any other query – Please call Watford 01923 217530

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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**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.**

### **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 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 scope (gastroscope) is passed down into your gullet or stomach with a special device attached to the tip of the scope. 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 6.30am on the morning of the procedure. If you have an afternoon appointment you must not eat anything after 7am but can drink sips of water up to 11.30am.

If you are taking diabetic medication, you can contact your GP or nurse specialist for advice. **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 conscious sedation.

### **Having Sedation**

This test is usually done with conscious sedation. Please note this is not a general anaesthetic. Conscious sedation will be given to you through a small tube in a vein in your arm or hand. This will make you feel relaxed but not asleep. 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.

## **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?**

You will be given a copy of the report before you leave the department and the doctor or nurse will talk to you at the end of the procedure to explain their findings. If you have had samples sent to the laboratory the results will be reviewed by the Endoscopist and you will be contacted if there is anything of concern.

## **Are there any risks?**

There is a risk of causing significant bleeding which can occur in less than 5 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 (8.00am– 6.00pm Monday to Friday).

**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.