



# A guide to...

## Having a Gastroscopy and Dilatation

### *Patient Information*

#### How to contact us

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

Clinical queries – Hemel Hempstead 01442 287968 / Watford 01923 436095

Any other query – Please call Hemel Hempstead 01442 287681 / 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**



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

## **What is Gastroscopy and Dilatation?**

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. You are having this test as you have a narrowing in the section of your gullet, stomach or small intestine. A dilatation is when this section is stretched using a balloon passed down an endoscope. Once the narrowing has been stretched, food and drink will be able to pass through freely.

## **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) contact the unit immediately. Please take all other medication as you would usually. Please make sure you bring with you a list of all medications you are currently taking.

## **Having Sedation**

As this test is done using conscious sedation which will be given to you through a small cannula placed in an accessible vein in your arm or the back of your hand. This will make you feel relaxed but not asleep. Please note this is not a general anaesthetic. 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**

As you have had sedation you will need to try and rest for a short while before going home. You will need to wait at least two hours before we offer you a drink to check that you have no problems with swallowing. You will be given advice about what you can eat before you leave the unit. After you have had the dilatation, you are likely to feel some discomfort over the next few days.

## **Are there any risks?**

A gastroscopy and dilatation is a very safe procedure but rarely bleeding or a small hole in the gullet, stomach or small intestine can develop (perforation). The risk of this happening is less than one in every 100 cases. Although a gastroscopy is an extremely sensitive test, no procedure is 100% accurate and there is a small chance that abnormalities can be missed. 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 procedure.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

Your doctor has recommended a gastroscopy and dilatation as the best way of diagnosing and treating the narrowing. You can decide to leave the problem alone, but this is not recommended especially if you are having difficulty swallowing food.

A gastroscopy without dilatation or a barium meal are other investigations, but they will not improve your symptoms.

## **What happens if I decide not to have a gastroscopy and dilatation?**

Your doctor may not be able to confirm the cause of the problem. If you decide not to have a gastroscopy and dilatation, 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 - 8.00am– 6.00pm).

**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.