

# Gastroscopy (upper gastrointestinal endoscopy)

## What is a gastroscopy?

A gastroscopy, also known as an upper gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy or oesophago-gastroduodenoscopy (OGD), is a procedure that examines the inside of your oesophagus (food pipe), stomach, and the first part of your small intestine (duodenum). A thin, flexible tube called an endoscope is passed through your mouth into your digestive tract. The endoscope has a small camera at its tip, which allows your doctor to view detailed images of your upper digestive system. This procedure can diagnose and sometimes treat certain conditions.

## When is a gastroscopy recommended?

Your doctor may recommend a gastroscopy to investigate symptoms or to monitor and treat specific conditions. Common reasons include:

- Unexplained abdominal pain
- Persistent heartburn or acid reflux
- Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Vomiting blood or passing dark stools (signs of internal bleeding)
- Anaemia caused by low iron levels

A gastroscopy can also be used to take small tissue samples (biopsies) for further analysis or to treat conditions such as:

- Bleeding ulcers
- Abnormal tissue growths (polyps)

## Preparing for a gastroscopy

To ensure the procedure is effective and safe, you will need to follow these preparation steps:

- **Fasting:** Do not eat or drink for at least six to eight hours before your gastroscopy. This allows your stomach to be empty for a clear examination.
- **Medication:** Inform your doctor if you are diabetic or take blood-thinning medication, such as aspirin or warfarin. You may need to pause these medicines before the procedure.
- **Consent:** You will be asked to sign a consent form after discussing the procedure, its risks, and its benefits with your doctor.

## What to expect during the procedure

A gastroscopy is usually carried out as a day-case procedure, meaning you can return home the same day. It typically takes around 20 minutes to complete.

- **Anaesthetic or sedation:** Your throat may be numbed with a local anaesthetic spray. If you opt for sedation, a small needle (cannula) will be placed in your hand to administer the sedative, helping you feel relaxed and drowsy.
- **The procedure:** You will lie on your side while the endoscope is gently passed through your mouth, down your oesophagus, and into your stomach and duodenum. The camera on the endoscope sends real-time

images to a monitor, enabling your doctor to examine your digestive tract closely.

• **Biopsies and Treatments:** If needed, small instruments can be passed through the endoscope to:

- Take tissue samples (biopsies)
- Remove polyps
- Treat bleeding ulcers

The procedure is not painful, although you may feel mild discomfort, such as bloating or the urge to gag.

## Potential risks and complications

Gastroscopy is considered a safe and routine procedure. However, like all medical procedures, it carries a small risk of complications:

- **Sore throat:** This is the most common side effect and usually resolves quickly.
- **Bleeding:** Rare but possible, especially if a biopsy or treatment is performed. This typically stops on its own.
- **Perforation (tear):** A very rare complication where the oesophagus or stomach is accidentally damaged, which may require further treatment.
- **Sedation reactions:** Mild reactions, such as drowsiness or nausea, are more common. Serious reactions are extremely rare.

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience severe abdominal pain, heavy bleeding, or difficulty swallowing after the procedure.

## After the Procedure

After the gastroscopy:

- You will be monitored for a short while as the effects of sedation wear off.
- If you had sedation, you must not drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours. Please arrange for someone to take you home.
- Most patients can eat and drink as normal soon after the procedure but starting with light meals is recommended.
- You may experience mild symptoms such as:
  - A sore throat
  - Bloating
  - Wind

These symptoms usually subside within a few hours.

## Results and follow-up

Your doctor will discuss the initial findings of your gastroscopy with you. If biopsies were taken, it may take several days for the results to be available. Your doctor will arrange a follow-up appointment to discuss the results, and any further treatment needed. If treatments, such as removing a polyp, were performed during the procedure, you will be given specific aftercare instructions.

## Why Choose Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic?

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we pride ourselves on delivering expert, patient-focused care in a state-of-the-art facility. Our experienced team of specialists uses the latest technology to ensure accurate diagnoses and effective treatments. With a commitment to safety, comfort, and efficiency, we aim to provide you with the best possible experience during your gastroscopy.

## Contact us

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, our expert team ensures you receive a safe, comfortable, and efficient experience during your gastroscopy. If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure, please don't hesitate to contact us.