

Oesophageal dilatation

What is oesophageal dilatation?

Oesophageal dilatation is a procedure used to stretch and widen a narrowed oesophagus (food pipe) to make swallowing easier and more comfortable. Narrowing of the oesophagus, known as an oesophageal stricture, can occur due to various conditions and may cause difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), pain, or regurgitation of food. At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we specialise in oesophageal dilatation to help relieve these symptoms and improve your quality of life.

This minimally invasive procedure is usually performed during an upper GI endoscopy, where a thin, flexible tube with a camera is passed down your throat to examine the oesophagus. Depending on the nature of the stricture, your doctor may use one of two methods to widen the narrowed area:

- **Balloon dilatation** a small balloon is inserted into the stricture and gently inflated to stretch the oesophagus
- **Bougie dilatation** a tapered, flexible tube (bougie) is passed through the narrowed section to widen it gradually

Oesophageal dilatation is safe, effective, and can provide significant relief from symptoms, allowing you to eat and drink more comfortably.

Why might you need oesophageal dilatation?

Your doctor may recommend oesophageal dilatation if you are experiencing symptoms caused by a narrowing of the oesophagus. These symptoms may include:

- Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), particularly with solid foods
- A sensation that food is stuck in your throat or chest
- Regurgitation of food or liquids
- Pain or discomfort when swallowing
- Unexplained weight loss due to difficulty eating

Oesophageal strictures can develop due to various conditions, including:

- **Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)** where long-term acid reflux damages the oesophagus
- **Oesophagitis** inflammation of the oesophagus caused by acid reflux, infections, or medications
- **Barrett's oesophagus** a condition where the lining of the oesophagus changes due to chronic acid reflux
- **Oesophageal cancer** which can cause narrowing of the food pipe
- **Radiation therapy** to the chest, leading to scarring and strictures
- **Swallowing harmful substances** such as cleaning chemicals, which can damage the oesophagus

How do you prepare for the procedure?

To prepare for oesophageal dilatation, you'll need to:

- Avoid eating or drinking for 6-8 hours before the procedure to keep your stomach and oesophagus empty
- Inform your doctor about any medications you're taking or medical conditions you have
- Follow any specific instructions provided by your consultant

What happens during oesophageal dilatation?

The procedure typically takes 15-30 minutes and is performed under sedation to ensure you feel comfortable. Here's what to expect:

- You'll lie on your side, and a sedative will be given to help you relax.
- An endoscope (a thin, flexible tube with a camera) is passed through your mouth and into your oesophagus.
- The doctor will use a balloon or bougie to stretch the narrowed area of your oesophagus.
- Once the oesophagus has been widened, the endoscope is removed, and you'll be monitored as the sedation wears off.

Most patients can go home the same day after the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?

After oesophageal dilatation, you may:

- Experience mild discomfort or a sore throat, which usually resolves within a day or two
- Need to avoid eating or drinking for a few hours, as advised by your doctor
- Be prescribed medications, such as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), to reduce acid reflux and prevent the stricture from recurring

Your doctor will discuss the results of the procedure with you and provide guidance on follow-up care.

Are there any risks?

Oesophageal dilatation is a safe procedure, but like all medical treatments, it carries some risks. These may

include:

- Temporary soreness or chest discomfort
- Rarely, bleeding or a small tear (perforation) in the oesophagus
- A slight risk of infection

Your consultant will take every precaution to minimise these risks and will explain them in detail before the procedure.

Why choose Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic?

At Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic, we are dedicated to providing expert care for oesophageal strictures. Our experienced team uses state-of-the-art technology and a patient-centred approach to deliver effective, compassionate treatment. We work with you every step of the way to ensure your comfort and achieve the best possible outcome.

Contact us

If you're having trouble swallowing or other symptoms related to oesophageal narrowing, contact Birmingham Endoscopy Clinic today to book a consultation. Early diagnosis and treatment can