

Patient information

Oesophagoscopy

Disclaimer: The details in this section are for general information only. Always check with your own doctor.

What is Oesophagoscopy?

Oesophagoscopy is the examination of your gullet (swallowing tube) while you are under a general anaesthetic. It is done to help problems of the gullet, such as difficult or painful swallowing.

Your surgeon will pass a long metal tube (oesophagoscope) through your mouth into your gullet. This allows the surgeon to look at the inside of the gullet to find any problems that may be affecting your swallowing.

If there are any problem areas, a small part of the lining of the gullet is taken away for laboratory examination. This is called a biopsy.

Oesophagoscopy is quite a short operation and usually takes less than 20 minutes.

How will I feel after the operation?

After oesophagoscopy, you may find that your throat hurts. This is because of the metal tubes that are passed through your throat to examine the gullet. Any discomfort settles quickly with simple painkillers and usually only lasts a day or two.

Some patients feel their neck is slightly stiff after the operation. If you have a history of neck problems, you should inform the surgeon about this before your operation.

After oesophagoscopy, some people may not be allowed to eat or drink for a few hours, until your surgeon is happy there have been no complications.

Possible complications

Oesophagoscopy is very safe. You may have a slightly sore throat afterwards. Very

rarely, there is a risk that the metal tubes may chip your teeth. Your surgeon uses a gum guard to help prevent this happening.

If your surgeon needs to take a biopsy during the oesophagoscopy, or stretch the gullet, there is a very small risk of a tear in the lining of the gullet. This sometimes causes a leak through the wall of the gullet. If this happens, you will need to stay in hospital and not eat or drink anything. You then be fed with either a small tube through your nose into your stomach, or through a drip into a vein in your arm. This allows you to get special liquid food, while the leak in the wall of the gullet heals up. This may take several days.

When will I know what happened?

Your surgeon will usually be able to tell you what was found, and what they did to help you, on the same day as your operation.

If any biopsies were taken, these normally take a few days to process in a laboratory. Your surgeon will arrange to see you again for your results.

When can I go home?

Often you can go home the same day as the operation, as long as you have someone with you. Depending on how you feel afterwards, you may need to stay overnight for observation. You may be advised to stay off work for a few days to rest your throat, depending on your job.

Is there any alternative treatment?

Oesophagoscopy is the suitable technique used for examining the upper part of the oesophagus. However, if you need your lower oesophagus or stomach looked at then fiberoptic gastro-oesophagoscope is used. This examination will be performed by a gastroenterologist who will be able to tell you what to expect.

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