



Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP)

Several of our gastroenterologists have specialized training in a complex procedure known as Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography, or ERCP. This procedure is utilized to evaluate and treat conditions such as gallstones, possible malignancies and bile duct obstruction. ERCP involves passing a specialized endoscope through the mouth, esophagus, stomach and duodenum. From the duodenum, a small catheter is introduced into the bile or pancreatic ducts that lead to the gall bladder, liver and pancreas. Once the catheter is in place, a contrast dye is injected to fill the ducts. The contrast dye allows the doctor to visualize the ducts under fluoroscopy (x-ray). Abnormalities are usually seen as a narrowing of the duct or as filling defects – that is, the duct does not fill as anticipated. During the ERCP the doctor may be able to remove stones from the duct or place a stent to open a narrowed area. Minimally invasive treatments available with ERCP help to make patients more comfortable and may, at times, be helpful in avoiding surgery.

Prior to the procedure:

You should not eat or drink anything after midnight the day before your procedure – or for at least 8 hours prior to the start of your procedure. Please discuss with your doctor whether he wants you to take any of your daily medicines on the morning of your procedure, for example, medicine for your blood pressure.

What to expect during the procedure:

A monitor will record your blood pressure, pulse, blood oxygen levels, as well as the heart rate and rhythm throughout the procedure. Your doctor will give you medicine through an IV to help you relax and be more comfortable during the procedure.

You'll lie on an x-ray table and positioned comfortably on your stomach. Your doctor will pass the endoscope through your mouth and into the esophagus, stomach, and duodenum. The endoscope doesn't interfere with your breathing.

What to expect after the procedure:

The procedure itself usually takes 30 to 60 minutes, although you should plan on being at the hospital for several hours. This includes preparation and recovery time. For your safety, your doctor may arrange for you to stay overnight at the hospital for observation. The medicine you receive may make it difficult for you to remember what the doctor or nurses tell you after your procedure. It is helpful to have someone with you who can also hear the instructions and stay with you on the day of the procedure. You cannot operate machinery or drive a motorized vehicle for 24 hours after the procedure. Please make arrangements for someone to be at the hospital to take you home. Please see [endoscopy discharge instructions](#) in the patient resources section of this website.