



## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

# ERCP Explained

## Endoscopy Unit

### **What is an ERCP?**

It is an examination, which combines the use of a thin highly flexible tube (duodenoscope) and X-rays to examine the bile duct and the pancreas. The tube is passed gently through your mouth down through the stomach to the opening of the bile duct. This allows the endoscopist to use very fine instruments through the scope to examine and treat the bile duct or pancreas depending on the symptoms you have been suffering from.

If the X-rays show a gallstone in the bile duct, the exit of the bile duct can be enlarged with a cut using an electric current (diathermy). Depending on the size of the stone, it can be removed straight away. If the problem with the bile duct is due to a blockage, then a very small tube (stent) can be placed through the blockage, which allows the bile to drain freely and relieve your symptoms.

The test itself will last approximately 15-45 minutes and you may be able to go home approximately 4 hours later.

### **What does the examination involve?**

- ❖ The endoscopist doing the examination will discuss it with you and you will be asked to sign a consent form, to confirm that you understand and agree to go ahead with it. You are free to ask for more information at any time.
- ❖ You will need to undress and wear a hospital gown and dressing gown.
- ❖ You will receive a sedative and an analgesic injection for the test and another drug to relax the gut.
- ❖ Then with you lying on your stomach the endoscopist will gently insert the endoscope through your mouth. **This is not painful and will not make breathing or swallowing difficult**, but you might feel a little uncomfortable during the test.
- ❖ The nurse will be with you during your test.
- ❖ At the end of the test the endoscope is easily removed.

## How do I prepare for the test?

For the ERCP to be successful and for the endoscopist to have a clear view, your stomach and intestine must be empty.

- ❖ You may be asked to have a blood test (INR) prior to your examination. A nurse will discuss this with you before your appointment.
- ❖ **It is important that you do not eat anything for 6 hours before your test.**
- ❖ **You may drink sips of water up until 2 hours before your appointment.**
- ❖ **If you have Diabetes or are on Warfarin / Clopidogrel, please inform the Endoscopy Unit on 01803 654864 / 655955.**
- ❖ You can continue to take your usual medications but please bring a list of them with you to your appointment. **It is important that you remember to bring any asthma inhalers or angina sprays with you.**
- ❖ Jewellery and decorative piercing should ideally be removed. If you cannot remove your jewellery, it can be covered with tape, but please inform us when you see the nurse on the day of your procedure. Please inform us also of any coloured tattoos.

## What will happen when I arrive?

An endoscopy nurse will care for you from your arrival through to your discharge from the Unit. The nurse will check your details, blood pressure, blood test result, pulse and temperature and stay with you during the ERCP. If you have any allergies please tell the nurse.

## What happens after the examination?

- ❖ Your nurse will care for you following the test.
- ❖ You will be able to start drinking clear fluids 2-4 hours later.
- ❖ You will not be able to eat until the next day.
- ❖ If you are able to go home, you will be discharged into the care of your carer / family.
- ❖ **You will need** someone to stay overnight with you after the procedure.
- ❖ There are certain circumstances where you may be required to stay in hospital overnight and you should be prepared for this.

## How will I feel when I go home?

- ❖ You may have a mild sore throat and feel a little bloated but this will soon pass and is nothing to worry about.
- ❖ **We will ask you to refrain from eating until the following morning but you may continue to drink clear fluids (no milk).**

**About sedation**

You will be sedated for this test. A small plastic tube (cannula) is placed in a vein in your arm and a sedative drug will be given before the test starts.

**Benefits**

You will feel relaxed during the test and may or may not remember much about it.

**Drawbacks**

Sedation takes up to 24 hours to wear off and during this time you are **not safe to:**

- ❖ **Drive a vehicle or operate machinery**
- ❖ **Drink alcohol**
- ❖ **Sign legal documents or make important decisions**

It is **very important** that you are not alone during this period, and that you do not use public transport, but are collected from the Unit.

**Are there any risks?**

This examination is very safe. There is a small risk of:

- ❖ **Damage** to dental bridgework, loose teeth or crowned teeth.
- ❖ **Inflammation of the pancreas:** This is called 'pancreatitis'; it can be painful and usually requires a short stay in hospital for intravenous fluids and painkillers to be administered.
- ❖ **Bleeding:** If a cut is made into the bile duct to remove a stone, there is a risk of bleeding. This can often be treated straight away through the endoscope and is rarely a major complication.

**Please talk to the endoscopist before the examination if you have any worries about these risks.**

**Useful contacts**

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact:

The Endoscopy Unit  
☎ **Tel (01803) 654864/655955**  
(8.00am - 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday)

If you have any urgent concerns outside of these hours  
please phone the switchboard  
☎ **Tel (01803) 614567**  
and ask for bleep no **110**

