NHS Forth Valley

ERCP (Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography)

Patient Information Leaflet
It has been found necessary for you to undergo an ERCP (Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangio-Pancreatography), a procedure and test that allow the examination of the pancreas and the bile ducts with an endoscope (a soft flexible tube with a light on the end). The procedure can be uncomfortable but not painful and is preceded by giving a mild sedative and spraying the mouth with a local anaesthetic. The test itself takes 30-45 minutes.

The examination will be carried out mid afternoon but your appointment is at the time stated in order to undergo a preliminary health check and blood tests. You will receive an antibiotic by mouth and an intravenous cannula will be placed in your arm or hand.

Peptic ulcers look like mouth ulcers. They are sensitive raw patches in the lining of the stomach or duodenum (the part of the gut immediately after the stomach).
Preparing for the Investigation

Please have an early breakfast of tea and toast around 8am and nothing to eat thereafter, this includes any medication you may be taking. You may sip clear fluids up until 2 hours before.

Please inform us before your appointment if you think you may be pregnant. Please see your GP about stopping blood thinning ‘Warfarin’ tablets prior this appointment.

Diabetics (afternoon appointments)

You may have a light breakfast at 8am and a smaller dose of insulin. Please telephone the Endoscopy Unit or Diabetic Department for further advice regarding your medication whilst fasting.

You may continue to sip clear fluids up until 2 hours before your appointment.

If you take METFORMIN (Glucophage) tablets, these need to be stopped 48 hours before this test. Please telephone us for advice, you may need admitted for a couple of days beforehand to stabilize your diabetes.
The purpose of the procedure is to firstly determine the cause of your symptoms. You will be positioned on an X-ray table and your throat will be numbed with a local anaesthetic spray. Oxygen will be administered via a fine soft nasal sponge. Your pulse and oxygen levels will be monitored during and after the procedure. Intravenous sedation is administered via your cannula, in order to make you sleepy; and topped up during the procedure if required. Once you are sleepy, an endoscope is passed through your mouth, down into the duodenum (small bowel) and a small cannula will insert dye into the pancreatic and/or bile ducts. X-ray pictures are then taken and this may be the procedure completed. The dye is passed out of your body harmlessly. Occasionally if there is a blockage, the doctor may enlarge the opening of the duct with an electrically heated wire (diathermy), which you will not feel. This will enable access to blockages/stones etc.

If a narrowing is found, bile can be drained by leaving a short plastic tube (stent) in the bile duct. You will not be aware of the presence of the stent, which will remain in place permanently. Occasionally, it may be necessary to replace the stent some months later if it becomes blocked.

What about my Medication?

Any medication can be taken at 8am with your breakfast, but not after. Diabetics - see page 3.

If you bring your medication with you, you will be able to take them within 90 minutes of your test. Please complete the Pre-Endoscopy Questionnaire and Consent Form enclosed with your appointment and bring them with you.
The procedure takes from 30-45 minutes. It is difficult to predict how long each ERCP will take so we apologise if there is any delay before your procedure is carried out. You will be ready to go home approximately 4-5 hours after your admission.

You will be given a drink in the department before you leave, this will be at least 90 minutes after receiving the throat spray.

Complications/Risks

There is a slight risk of damage to crowns or bridgework.
Very occasionally, patients react badly to the sedative and this risk increases in those with heart or lung conditions.
Some patients may develop a cough or an infection in the chest following ERCP.
Occasionally, the pancreas or biliary tract can be inflamed by the procedure and this will require hospital inpatient treatment.
The gullet, the stomach or the bowel may be damaged causing bleeding or a perforation, which may require an operation to repair, and as with any surgical procedure, can be a risk to life.
These complications are potentially life threatening in approximately 1% of cases and your need for this procedure should be weighed up against the possible risks and complications. Your GP or hospital doctor can help you with this decision.
**Going Home**

Your relatives should telephone the ward at approx 4.00 pm to find out whether you are being allowed home or if you are to be admitted overnight. Please be prepared for either eventuality by having an overnight bag packed. This can be kept in the car. If you are allowed home, it is essential that someone can collect you around 5-6pm and arrangements made for a responsible person to stay with you overnight.

**After Effects**

Patients commonly find some slight throat discomfort after the procedure that usually settles in 1-2 days. If you have abdominal discomfort, it is most likely “wind” and should pass off within a few hours. You will be given an aftercare sheet on discharge.
If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

THE FORTH VALLEY ROYAL HOSPITAL
Endoscopy Unit
(01324 567518) Mon – Fri 9am – 4pm
If you can’t go let us know!
Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

We are happy to consider requests for this publication in other languages or formats such as large print. Please call 01324 590886 (24hrs), fax 01324 590867 or email disability.department@nhs.net

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SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED ON NHS FORTH VALLEY PREMISES
This includes corridors, doorways, car parks and any of our grounds. If you do smoke on NHS premises you may be liable to prosecution and a fine.