



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Having an Oesophageal Dilatation

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

## **Endoscopy Unit**

York Hospital Patients:

York Hospital  
Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 726694  
between 8am and 6pm

Scarborough Hospital Patients:

Scarborough Hospital  
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Telephone: 01723 385141



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# **What is oesophageal dilatation?**

You have been advised to have a narrowing of your gullet (oesophageal stricture) treated to improve your swallowing. Your tests may indicate that there is a short area of narrowing, which is resulting in your symptoms.

This leaflet is designed to answer any questions you may have but if there are any worries please do not hesitate to ask when you attend the Endoscopy Unit where the staff will be available to deal with any queries.

Oesophageal dilation is a procedure undertaken usually as a day case on the Endoscopy Unit, under sedation. It is usually quick, safe, and straightforward but may need to be repeated where narrowings (strictures) are very tight or complex.

# How is oesophageal dilatation carried out?

You will be asked to attend the Endoscopy Unit having fasted for eight hours beforehand. The procedure will be explained to you and any queries will be answered. We will give you a sedative injection to make you sleepy (but not anaesthetised) and a doctor will pass a flexible endoscope under the back of your tongue into your oesophagus. This allows the doctor to assess the size of the narrowing.

Sometimes small biopsies (tissue samples) will be taken and a procedure to open the narrowing up will be carried out. A number of techniques are used but commonly a balloon can be passed down the endoscope and placed across the narrowing where it is gently inflated, stretching open the narrowed area. A guidewire runs through the balloon and is sometimes passed across the stricture first to ensure that the balloon is going in the right place.

Sometimes x-ray equipment is used to help this process.

The procedure is then repeated with larger balloons until the narrowed area has been stretched enough. The procedure usually takes 10-15 minutes and is generally not painful although it can be uncomfortable.

Once you have recovered from the procedure you will be given a test drink. You will then be assessed to ensure that you are well enough to return home safely. Occasionally patients are admitted for a short period of observation, but this is not common. Please tell the doctor or nurse if you have any allergies or bad reactions to drugs before the test.

After the procedure you will be left to rest. Your throat and chest, that is the area that has been dilated, may feel sore. This can be felt both at the front or the back of your chest. Do tell the nursing staff if you have any pain or discomfort. If there are no problems following the procedure you will be given clear guidance by the team about what you can eat or drink. Often a test of a drink of water is tried in the first place. Sometimes an X-ray is performed if there are any concerns. After that, sometimes you will be able to eat normally but on other occasions you will be asked to have a diet of sloppy food; for example soup or nutritious drinks or something in between that and normal food.

## **Are there any risks in having an oesophageal dilatation?**

Oesophageal endoscopy and dilatation carry a very small risk of making a hole or tear in the oesophagus (perforation). This occurs in less than one in 100 cases. Sometimes the perforation is small, for example, where the guide wire has caused a small puncture, and this can be managed without an operation but will always require admission to hospital. Otherwise such damage can require surgery to repair it or a prolonged hospital stay.

Other risks from this procedure include excess drowsiness following sedation, or damage to teeth or dental work as the instruments are passed through the mouth. These risks too are very small.

Occasionally stretching causes some bleeding but this is usually not serious and settles quickly. You may be admitted to hospital if it does not settle.

## **Do the medicines I take affect the dilatation?**

If you have diabetes (especially taking insulin) or you have serious heart, lung or kidney problems, or concerned that a health problem you have may be affected, then contact the endoscopy department at the hospital you are having your examination (see contact numbers).

Warfarin – These are blood thinning tablets and usually have to be stopped for a period of time before your test, please contact your endoscopy department for advice.

Latex – Please inform the department if you have a confirmed latex allergy as this will affect your appointment time.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease/variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) commonly known as mad cow disease – Please inform the department if you have been notified that you are at risk of CJD/vCJD for public health reasons.

Clopidogrel, ticagrelor, prasugrel and cangrelor – Please inform the department if you are taking these tablets as these may need to be stopped prior to your procedure.

Pregnancy – It is important that you inform us if there is a possibility that you may be pregnant. Any information you share with us will be kept strictly confidential.

If you take any of the following blood thinning tablets, please contact the Endoscopy Department before your appointment for further advice:

Apixaban  
Rivaroxaban  
Dabigatran  
Argatroban  
Edoxaban



## **What are the benefits?**

The benefits are that we should be able to restore your swallowing to normal or near normal, although several procedures may be required to do this.

## **Is there an alternative?**

Unfortunately, there are few alternatives as surgery on this area of the gullet is both complex and carries a much higher risk than endoscopic treatment. Drug therapy may reduce the risk of strictures recurring but often is not enough on its own once the narrowing has become tight enough to cause difficulty swallowing.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

When you have been assessed as fit to leave the Unit, we will give you written information on the procedure and instructions for what follow up may be required and what medication you should take. Before you go home your doctor will discuss the findings of the procedure with you and any further treatment you may require.

Often patients find it helpful to have a relative or friend accompanying them for this discussion.

It is very important that you have made arrangements to be looked after at home for 24 hours following the procedure as sedation impairs your ability to do this yourself. We advise patients that after sedation they are unable to drive for 24 hours, unable to operate equipment such as cookers or machinery and unable to sign legal documents. Unfortunately, if you have not been able to make provision to be looked after at home following the procedure we will be unable to undertake it. If this is likely to be a problem, please inform the Endoscopy Unit beforehand so that we can arrange a brief admission to hospital.

The effects of the procedure and the injections have usually worn off by the following day, when you will be able to resume your normal activities, although your throat may remain sore for a day or two afterwards.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Endoscopy Unit, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York,  
telephone 01904 726694 or

Endoscopy Unit, Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive,  
Scarborough, YO12 6QL, telephone 01723 385141

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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