



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Your guide to having an ERCP

(endoscopic retrograde
cholangiopancreatogram)

Issued by the Endoscopy Team



This leaflet gives information about the ERCP (endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatogram) procedure.

What is an ERCP?

This is a procedure which allows the doctor to take detailed x-rays of the bile ducts and/or the pancreas. It involves passing a flexible tube through your mouth into your stomach and into the beginning of the small intestine. The tube is approximately the size of your middle finger.



What are the benefits of having an ERCP?

An ERCP can be used to treat certain conditions. Small gallstones can sometimes be removed, or a blockage of the bile duct relieved.

What happens before the test?

You will be contacted in order to arrange an appointment so we can talk to you face to face or telephone you prior to your procedure. The purpose of this is to ensure that you are correctly prepared for your procedure. The exact details of when to come to the hospital will be explained during your pre assessment. You will be admitted onto a ward at our specialist emergency hospital (NSECH) at Cramlington. An appointment for your ERCP will be agreed and you will also be sent a confirmation letter by the contact centre.

ERCP is provided at NSECH as the specialist equipment and x-ray facilities are located there.

It is important that we have a recent set of a specific type of blood results prior to your procedure. These blood results tell us whether it is safe to carry out the test especially if you are on any blood thinning drugs, again this will be discussed during your pre assessment.

Will I have to follow any fasting instructions?

On the day of the test you must **not** have anything to eat for **6 hours** before the test. You can drink small amounts of water up until 2 hours before your test then you must be nil by mouth until after the procedure. Following your procedure the nursing staff will tell you when you can eat and drink again.

What about taking my tablets?

If you are taking any of the tablets listed below please inform the pre assessment nurse:

- Warfarin
- Phenindione
- Acenocourmarol
- Rivaroxaban
- Dabigatrin
- Apixaban
- Clopidogrel
- Prasugrel

All patients on these drugs must follow the instructions given at the pre assessment appointment.

If after your pre assessment appointment you forget or are not sure what to do, contact the Endoscopy departments at:

North Tyneside General Hospital 0191 293 9672

Wansbeck General Hospital 01670 529 063

If you are taking an oral contraceptive pill, please take your pill as normal.

What if I am a diabetic?

If you are a diabetic on either tablets or insulin, you will be given advice on how to manage your diabetes at your pre assessment.

Who will do the test?

A consultant gastroenterologist or surgeon will perform your ERCP. A senior trainee in gastroenterology or surgery may also participate in the test, but only under the direct supervision of the consultant. You may be asked if medical students can observe your ERCP but you can refuse if you wish.

Will I be awake during the test?

You will be given local anaesthetic throat spray and an intravenous injection to make you more comfortable during the test. This injection will be given through a cannula (small tube) inserted into one of your veins and is a mixture of a painkiller and a sedative. People respond to the injection in different ways. The majority of people are very drowsy and do not remember having the test afterwards. Others may be more alert and remember the examination. It is not always safe to give more of the sedative drug. You will be carefully monitored by a nurse and the consultant during your procedure. Sedation will not “knock you out” like a general anaesthetic but it is very effective in making you relaxed during the procedure. Prior to going for your ERCP you will be given a rectal pain killing suppository which will continue to act after the procedure to make you as comfortable as possible.

What happens after the test?

Following the test you will be taken to a recovery area where you will be carefully monitored until you are able to return to the ward. The ward staff will discharge you. You will receive a copy of your endoscopy report to take home with you. If you go home the same day of the test you must have a responsible adult to accompany you home and stay with you for 24 hours. You cannot drive for 24 hours after your procedure.

Are there any risks in having an ERCP?

Like all medical procedures, there are some risks in having an ERCP. Minor side effects such as a sore throat are quite common. There is a small risk of damage to dental work, crowns and loose teeth.

More serious side effects can occur in approximately 1 in 20 procedures. These can include bleeding, damage to the lining of the intestine or inflammation of the pancreas. If you do experience any of these rarer complications the impact on you can range from spending a few days in hospital recovering, to the need for major surgery. Sometimes it can be too risky to complete your test, for example, if you have food in your stomach. All of the risks will be discussed during your pre assessment and prior to you signing your consent form.

Are there any alternatives to an ERCP?

In general, ERCP is the best means of identifying problems with the bile ducts and pancreas and in treating any abnormality. This is especially true if you are jaundiced. It may also be possible to find out what is wrong using other methods, such as ultrasound, CT or MRI scans. However, none of these can be used to treat any problem that is found. Surgery may be an alternative way of sorting out the problem. However, ERCP is often needed first to identify the exact cause of the problem.

Will my ERCP be the only test needed to sort out my problem?

In approximately 9 out of 10 cases an ERCP will diagnose the problem and allow complete treatment to take place. In more complicated cases further treatment may be needed afterwards in the form of another ERCP, surgery or other specialist procedures.

Are you worried about having an ERCP?

It is natural to feel worried about this test. Pre assessment is designed to give you as much information as we can in order to prepare you for this test. During pre-assessment we will ask you a series of questions relating to your general health. This ensures we know all about you and we can put in any interventions to make the test as safe as possible. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have during your pre assessment appointment.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 244/V3

Review date: June 2021

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust