



P R O C E D U R E I N F O S H E E T

## ERCP

ERCP (Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography) is a procedure in which your physician examines the gastrointestinal ducts that lead to the liver and pancreas.

The procedure is performed using an endoscope, which is a thin, flexible tube equipped with a tiny camera that allows the physician to view any affected regions of your gastrointestinal tract and make a much more accurate diagnosis. A narrow plastic tube is passed through the endoscope into the ducts. A contrast material, or “dye”, is then gently injected and X-ray pictures are taken to assist the physician in evaluating your condition.

### WHY DO I NEED AN ERCP?

The ERCP procedure helps physicians identify any problems in the bile ducts or pancreas. ERCPs can be used to check for gallstones, blockage of the bile ducts, pancreatitis, cancer, yellow jaundice, or undiagnosed upper-abdominal pain.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE MY ERCP PROCEDURE?

You will need to have a completely empty stomach for the procedure. Your physician will request that you do not eat for 6 to 12 hours before the test. Additionally, if you take any blood-thinning medication, your physician may request that you stop use for 3-5 days before the test.

### WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN ERCP?

The actual exam usually takes 30 to 45 minutes. Prior to the procedure, anesthesiology will give you medication through a vein to help you relax and better tolerate any discomfort. Sometimes a patient will

also receive an antibiotic before the procedure. The ERCP will begin with you lying either on your left side, stomach or back. The endoscope will then be passed through your throat, stomach, small intestine and into the bile/pancreatic ducts. The injection of the dye into the ducts rarely causes any discomfort. Your physician will then perform X-rays to allow for complete visualization of the ducts.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ERCP?**

The ERCP is generally well tolerated. You will usually be kept under observation until most of the effects from the medication have worn off. The physician will then explain the results of your exam. You may resume your usual diet unless instructed otherwise. Your throat may feel scratchy or sore after the procedure, but this will soon subside. An ERCP generally requires some anesthesia, which may make patients feel a bit woozy. Under these circumstances, patients are required to have a licensed driver take them back home. Taxis or other forms of hired transportation are not allowed.

### **ARE THERE ANY RISKS OF AN ERCP?**

Serious complications from this procedure are uncommon. There is a small chance of a hole forming in the stomach, duodenum, or esophagus from the scope moving through these areas. There is also a small risk of bleeding at the biopsy site. Your physician will address any concerns you may have prior to the procedure.



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