

What is ERCP?

Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography, or ERCP, is a specialised technique used to study and treat abnormalities of the ducts or “drainage tubes” of the gallbladder, pancreas and liver.

During ERCP a duodenoscope (a thin, flexible, side viewing endoscope) is passed through your mouth, past the oesophagus and stomach and into the first part of the small intestine. A thin guidewire and narrow plastic tube called a sphincterotome is then passed into the ducts. X-ray dye is injected in order to obtain a picture of the ducts. If an abnormality is found, a small incision is usually made along the duct to allow further therapeutic procedures. This may include removal of stones or debris, dilation of narrowings, insertion of stents or a biopsy.

How are you prepared?

You must fast for at least 8 hours prior to the procedure to ensure you have an empty stomach.

Special considerations

Generally you should take your regular medications on the morning of the procedure, however if you are taking blood-thinning medications you will need to discuss this with Dr Holt. Please advise if you are diabetic or have a pacemaker.

What happens on the day of the procedure?

- § Come to the Endoscopy Unit at the time you are told. Don't bring any valuables.
- § You will be admitted by a nurse.
- § Local anaesthetic spray and intravenous sedation are used to make you comfortable. Some patients also receive antibiotics before or during the procedure.
- § You will lie on your left side or stomach on an x-ray table during the procedure. ERCP usually takes around 30 to 45 minutes to perform. The instrument does not interfere with breathing. Most patients remember little or none of the procedure.

What happens afterwards?

- § After the procedure you will be taken to the Recovery Area until any sedation wears off – you may have some bloating and discomfort from the air inserted during the procedure, which will pass.
- § You must remain fasting for **4 hours** and remain on clear liquid diet until the next day.
- § You may not drive yourself, sign legal documents, or drink alcohol that day. An adult needs to take you home and stay with you.
- § The following day you should only eat light, non-fatty food.

If you are in severe pain, please contact Dr Holt or present at your local emergency department.