

Oesophageal Manometry - A Guide to the Test

Information for patients



Abdominal Medicine
and Surgery

The aim of this leaflet is to answer some of the questions you may have about your forthcoming oesophageal manometry test.

Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything further you would like to know.

Why do I need the test?

The test measures the pressure activity within your gullet (oesophagus) when you swallow and how well the muscle at the top of the stomach is working. From this, we can establish if your symptoms are due to certain disorders of the oesophagus.

What should I expect?

Before the Test:

You should not have anything to eat six hours before the test but you can have drink up to three hours before.

This will mean nothing from midnight for morning appointments and nothing from 8:00am for afternoon appointments.

If you are taking diabetic medication contact the department on 0113 206 4268 or your GP or nurse specialist for advice.

On arrival

You will have a chance to talk with the person performing the test to discuss your symptoms and receive more information about the test. You will also have the chance to ask any question you may have.

What is oesophageal manometry?

Oesophageal manometry is a test that looks at the way the muscles in your gullet work. It involves passing a small tube (catheter) down into your stomach. The catheter goes through your nose first - this may seem a strange way to get to your stomach but in fact makes the procedure more comfortable and enables you to talk and swallow normally. If you prefer, a local anaesthetic spray can be used to numb your nose and throat before the catheter is passed.

Once the catheter is in place, you will be asked to lie down on a couch. The investigator will then use special equipment to see how the gullet muscles are working. You will be asked to swallow small and then larger amounts of water at timed intervals during the test. At the end of the test the catheter is taken out.

The test will take about 30 minutes and, though you might experience some minor discomfort, most people are surprised at how easy the procedure was.

What happens after the test?

Because your throat may have been numbed, you may need to wait 20 minutes before eating or drinking anything hot.

You are able to drive as you will not have received any sedation and you can carry on your normal daily activities straight away.

Are there any risks?

Oesophageal Manometry is a very safe procedure, side effects are minor. Some people might have a sore throat for a day or so afterwards and this can be treated with simple throat lozenges. Other rare side effects include nose-bleeds or sinus problems, which are usually mild and do not last long.

Occasionally people are unable to tolerate the tube being passed over the back of the throat and it is not possible to do the test.

Are there any alternatives?

Your doctor has recommended this test as it is the best way of assessing your swallowing problems or chest pain. As an alternative it may be possible to have a barium swallow but this does not provide the same information. You would need to discuss this alternative with your doctor.

Although oesophageal manometry is a very sensitive test, no procedure is completely accurate and there is a small chance that abnormalities can be 'missed'. If you are worried about any of these risks, please do not hesitate to contact the department before you are due to have this test.

What happens if I decide not to have the test?

Your doctor may not be able to confirm the cause of the problem. If you decide not to have oesophageal manometry you should discuss this carefully with your doctor or contact the team on the telephone number below.

This leaflet has been designed as a general guide to your test. If you have any questions that you feel have not been answered, or if you require patient transport or need an interpreter for this test contact the Department on:

Tel: 0113 206 4268 (Monday – Friday: 8:30am-4:00pm)