
PATIENT GUIDE

Gastroscopy

Preparation & What to Expect



A clear, simple guide to help you prepare for your gastroscopy, covering what to do beforehand, what happens on the day, and what to expect during recovery.

Under the care of **Dr Brad Bidwell** · MBBS, BSc.(Hons), PhD, FRACS

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

What is a gastroscopy?

A gastroscopy, also called an upper endoscopy, is a routine examination of the upper digestive tract: the oesophagus (food pipe), stomach and the first part of the small bowel. Using a thin, flexible tube with a small camera on the end, Dr Bidwell can view the lining of these areas clearly on a screen.

It is a valuable way to investigate symptoms such as reflux, indigestion, difficulty swallowing, upper abdominal pain or anaemia, and to look for ulcers, inflammation or other changes. Small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken painlessly during the procedure. The examination itself usually takes **10 to 15 minutes**, and you will be offered sedation so you remain comfortable throughout.

Why preparation matters

Your stomach must be empty so that Dr Bidwell can see the lining clearly and so the procedure is safe. Following the fasting instructions in your admission paperwork closely is the most important thing you can do to prepare.

Before your procedure

IN THE DAYS BEFORE

- Tell the clinic about all medications you take, especially blood thinners (e.g. warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, apixaban, rivaroxaban), diabetes medications and any strong reflux medications. Some may need to be paused or adjusted.
- Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home and stay with you afterwards, as you cannot drive or travel alone after sedation.

FASTING ON THE DAY

- Do not eat any food for at least 6 hours before your appointment, so your stomach is empty.
- You may usually have small sips of clear fluids up to 2 hours beforehand, but always follow the specific timing given in your admission instructions.
- If you take regular morning medications, check with the clinic about which to take with a small sip of water.

What to expect

- 1. Arrival and check-in.** Come to the hospital at your scheduled time, having followed your fasting instructions. A nurse will check you in, confirm your details and place a small cannula (drip) in your hand or arm.
- 2. Meeting the team.** Dr Bidwell and the anaesthetic team will greet you, answer any questions and confirm your consent. Your throat may be numbed with a spray, and a soft mouthguard is used to protect your teeth.
- 3. The procedure.** You will rest on your side while sedation is given. The gastroscope is gently passed through your mouth to examine the upper digestive tract, and any biopsies needed are taken at the same time. It typically takes 10 to 15 minutes, and most people remember little of it.
- 4. Recovery.** You will rest in the recovery area for a short time as the sedation wears off. Your throat may feel slightly numb or mildly tender for a little while, which settles quickly.

After your procedure

Results. Dr Bidwell will speak with you about what was found once you are awake. If biopsies were taken, those results follow later and will be discussed at your follow-up appointment.

Rest of the day. Because of the sedation, do not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents or drink alcohol for the rest of the day, and have a responsible adult with you. Once your swallowing feels normal, you can begin with a light meal and return to normal eating.

When to seek help

Sedation and surgery are very safe, but contact the clinic or seek medical care promptly if, in the days afterwards, you experience:

- Severe or persistent abdominal or chest pain
- Difficulty or pain when swallowing, or trouble breathing
- Vomiting blood, or passing black, tarry stools
- Fever, chills or feeling generally unwell

If symptoms are severe or you are very unwell, call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Contact the clinic

If you have any questions about your preparation, procedure or recovery, please get in touch, and the team will be happy to help.

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This guide provides general information only and is not a substitute for personalised medical advice. Always follow the specific instructions given to you by Dr Bidwell and the clinic.