

EGD (esophagogastroduodenoscopy)

EGD or "upper endoscopy" is performed by a gastroenterologist to help in diagnosing disorders of the esophagus, stomach, and duodenum. It is particularly useful in diagnosing and treating problems related to gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), ulcers, and upper gastrointestinal bleeding.

Upper endoscopy is the visual examination of the upper gastrointestinal tract using a lighted, flexible endoscope. It is performed in the outpatient setting and utilizes intravenous sedation. The endoscope is inserted through the mouth into the esophagus (swallowing tube), stomach and upper part of the small intestine (duodenum). The examination takes approximately 5-10 minutes. Due to the use of intravenous sedation, there is no pain and patients typically do not remember the procedure.

The gastroenterologist may take a biopsy during this examination, but this is never felt by the patient. During passage of the endoscope the gastroenterologist may encounter an esophageal stricture. An esophageal stricture is a gradual narrowing of the esophagus, which can lead to swallowing difficulties. The most common cause of narrowing of the esophagus, or stricture, is scarring of the esophagus from reflux of stomach acid occurring in patients with heartburn. This gastroesophageal reflux disease is frequently known as GERD. Patients with a narrowed portion of esophagus often have trouble swallowing; food feels like it is "stuck" in the chest region, causing discomfort or pain. Less common causes of esophageal narrowing are webs or rings (which are thin layers of excess tissue), cancer of the esophagus, scarring after radiation treatment, or a disorder of the way the esophagus moves (motility disorders). During an upper endoscopy, the gastroenterologist may encounter an esophageal stricture and may be required to dilate such a stricture. Esophageal dilatation is a procedure that allows the gastroenterologist to dilate, or stretch, a narrowed area of the esophagus. Gastroenterologists can use various elaborate techniques for this dilatation which occurs while the patient is sedated.