

# **Middlesex/Monmouth Gastroenterology**

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## **SOME ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ERCP (ENDOSCOPIC RETROGRADE CHOLANGIO-PANCREATOGRAPHY)**

It has been decided after careful medical assessment that an ERCP is necessary for further evaluation and treatment of your condition. We have prepared this information sheet to help you understand the procedure.

### **WHAT IS ERCP?**

An ERCP scope is a long, flexible tube that is thinner than most food you swallow. It is inserted through the mouth into the upper digestive tract and allows the physician to obtain x-rays of the bile ducts and pancreas. The purpose is to learn more about the problem you may have.

### **WHAT PREPARATION IS REQUIRED?**

The stomach must be completely empty of food, so you should not eat any food or liquids after midnight the night before the procedure. Discontinue the use of aspirin products (including Anacin, Bufferin, etc.) for one week before the examination. Be sure to let the doctor know if you are allergic to any drugs, are on blood thinners or anticoagulants, or have an artificial heart valve or congenital heart disease. Depending on your condition, you may go home later that afternoon, or you may remain at the hospital until the next day. If you are to go home the same day, a companion must accompany you because you will be given medication to help you relax. It will make you drowsy, so you will need someone to take you home. You will not be allowed to drive after the procedure. Even though you may not feel tired, your judgment and reflexes may not be normal. Please bring your x-rays with you, as they may be important. Please check with your doctor to see if he has them.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT DURING THE PROCEDURE?**

The doctors or the anesthesiologist will give you medication through a vein to make you relax and sleepy. While you are lying in a comfortable position on the x-ray table, the ERCP scope is inserted into your mouth and gradually advanced through the digestive tract to where the bile drains into the intestines. A thin catheter is then inserted into the bile ducts and pancreatic ducts and x-ray contrast is injected into these ducts. X-ray pictures are then taken. Depending on the condition present, a tiny cut can be made in the duct (sphincterotomy) so gallstones can be removed or a stent can be inserted into the ducts. The ERCP scope is then withdrawn. The examination usually takes about 30 - 60 minutes and there is minimal discomfort. Many patients even fall asleep during examination.

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

You will be kept in the recovery room area until most of the effects of the medication have worn off. You may feel bloated right after the procedure because of the air that was introduced while examining the stomach. You will be able to resume your diet after the ERCP unless you are instructed otherwise. The doctor will tell you what was found, a full report will be prepared for the physician who sent you here, and you will be returned to his or her care.

### **ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS FROM ERCP?**

ERCP is safe and associated with low risk. Possible complications are infection of the ducts, inflammation of the pancreas or bleeding if sphincterotomy is done. If you are concerned about any symptoms afterwards, call the doctor's office at any time of day or night.

### **WHY IS ERCP NECESSARY?**

ERCP is a safe and extremely worthwhile procedure, which is well tolerated. The decision to perform this procedure was based upon assessment of your particular problem. If you have any questions please call us. We want you to feel comfortable about ERCP. It is only through a relationship of mutual trust, respect and understanding that we can achieve our common goal - your good health. We thank you and your physician for choosing us to participate in this phase of your care. If you have any questions feel free to call us at (732) 577-1999.