

Oesophageal Dilatation

Oesophageal dilatation is a technique used to relieve difficulty in swallowing caused by narrowing of the oesophagus. The narrowing can either be the result of inflammation resulting in ulceration and scarring or, occasionally, it can be due to a growth of the oesophagus.

Dilatation is normally performed under light sedation by passing progressively larger tapered tubes over a guidewire which is placed in the stomach, using a gastroscope. Occasionally a balloon is used to dilate the area of narrowing.

This is not usually a painful procedure but can be uncomfortable due to irritation of the throat when the tubes are passed. You will be given a drink of local anaesthetic before the procedure to minimise this side effect.

Risks associated with Dilatation

The major risk of dilatation is perforation (tearing) of the oesophagus. This occurs when the dilator overstretches the oesophagus. This is a rare event, occurring in only approximately 1% of procedures but can have a serious effect due to the infection that results. Occasionally urgent surgery is required to control any leak or infection. For this reason, you will require a period of observation after dilatation and it is important that if you develop chest pain, you contact The Endoscopy Clinic immediately.

Further complications include bleeding and difficulty in swallowing. If you do notice blood either in the bowel motion or when you vomit, you should notify the Rooms as soon as possible.

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