

Care Gram

Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP)

What Is ERCP?

ERCP is a procedure used to diagnose diseases of the pancreas, liver, and bile system. The procedure is typically performed by a doctor who specializes in and treats these types of diseases.

What Happens During an ERCP?

First, you will receive sedation. Your doctor will use an endoscope (a long, flexible tube with a light and camera at the end) to examine the inside of the digestive system and locate the place where the bile ducts enter the intestines. A dye is injected into the bile ducts through a small hollow tube (catheter) passed through the endoscope. The dye allows your doctor to see your bile ducts, gallbladder, and sometimes the pancreas on X-ray. Once the source of the problem is found, your doctor may treat the problem by:

- Making a small incision in the opening of the bile duct to help small gallstones and bile drain appropriately
- Placing a small plastic drainage tube (stent) in the bile duct to allow it to drain
- Removing any gallstones

What Are the Risks of ERCP?

Possible complications include:

- Pancreatitis (an inflammation of the pancreas)
- Infection
- Bowel perforation
- Bleeding

These complications may lead to a hospital stay.

How Do I Prepare for an ERCP?

- Tell your doctor if you:
 - Are pregnant
 - Have a heart or lung condition
 - Are allergic to any medicines
 - Have an artificial heart valve
 - Have kidney disease or need dialysis
 - Are taking blood thinning medicines, such as Coumadin[®], Persantine[®], Plavix[®], or aspirin



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1616-1092
08/30/2016
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- Talk with your diabetes care provider if you have diabetes and use insulin or oral medicine. Your doctor may adjust the dose of insulin or oral medicine on the day of the test. Bring your diabetes medicine with you so that you can take it after the procedure.
- Take other medicines as directed by your primary care or referring doctor. Do not discontinue other medicines unless told to do so by your doctor.
- Do not eat or drink anything for 8 hours before the procedure.

What Should I Expect on the Day of the Procedure?

- Before the procedure:
 - You will be given a hospital gown to wear.
 - You will be asked to remove any eyeglasses or dentures.
 - An IV (intravenous line) will be started to allow medicine to be given.
 - The doctor performing the procedure will discuss what to expect during the procedure and explain any risks. This is the time to ask any questions, if you have any.
- During the procedure:
 - The doctor performs the procedure which lasts 1 to 4 hours.
 - A numbing medicine may be applied to the back of your throat.
 - You will be given a sedative through your IV. You will feel relaxed and drowsy.
 - A mouthpiece is placed in your mouth. It will not interfere with your breathing.
 - The doctor inserts the endoscope through your mouth, past the stomach and into the beginning of the small intestines.
 - The contrast agent is injected slowly while X-rays are taken.
- After the procedure:
 - You will stay in the recovery room for about 1 to 2 hours.
 - You may have a temporary sore throat. Lozenges may help.
 - A responsible adult must stay with you for at least 24 hours after the procedure.
 - Do not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours.

When Should I Call My Doctor?

Call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department if you have any of the following symptoms within 72 hours:

- Severe abdominal pain
- A cough that does not go away
- Fever
- Chills
- Chest pain
- Nausea or vomiting

How Do I Get My Results?

The results will be sent to your primary care or referring doctor who will discuss them with you. If the results of the procedure indicate the need for immediate follow-up, your doctor will be notified and needed arrangements will be made.