PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Esophageal Stent Placement

This information explains your esophageal stent placement, including how to prepare for your procedure and how to care for yourself after your procedure.

About Esophageal Stents

Your esophagus (food pipe) is the tube that carries food and liquids, including saliva, from your mouth to your stomach when you swallow. Esophageal cancer (cancer of your esophagus) can make it hard to swallow. This is called dysphagia.

In order to make it easier for you to swallow, your doctor has recommended that you get an esophageal stent. This is a hollow tube that’s placed in your esophagus in the area of the tumor to hold the area open.

Esophageal stents are inserted through your mouth, and no surgery is needed. Most people return home on the same day as their procedure. However, some people are admitted to the hospital after their procedure for observation.

Having a stent won’t affect your ability to receive cancer treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

1 Week Before Your Procedure

Ask about your medications

You may need to stop taking or change the dose of some of your medications before your procedure. Talk with your doctor if you take any of the medications below.

Anticoagulants (blood thinners)

If you take medication to thin your blood, such as to treat blood clots or to prevent a heart attack or stroke, ask the doctor who prescribes it when to stop taking it. See below for examples of blood thinners.
## Examples of Blood Thinners

- apixaban (Eliquis®)
- cilostazol (Pletal®)
- clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- dipyridamole (Aggrenox®)
- enoxaparin (Lovenox®)
- fondaparinux (Arixtra®)

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There are others, so check with your doctor if you’re not sure.

### Medications for diabetes

If you take insulin or other medications for diabetes, you may need to change the dose. Ask the doctor who prescribes your diabetes medication what you should do the day before and the morning of your procedure.

If you take metformin (such as Glumetza®) or a medication that contains metformin, don’t take it the day before or the day of your procedure.

### Get a letter from your doctor, if needed

- If you have an automatic implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD), you need to get a clearance letter from your cardiologist (heart doctor) before your procedure.
- If you’ve had chest pain, trouble breathing that’s new or worse, or have fainted in the last 6 weeks, you will need to get a clearance letter from your doctor before your procedure.
- Your MSK doctor’s office must receive your clearance letter(s) at least 1 day before your procedure.

### Arrange for someone to take you home

You must have a responsible care partner take you home after your procedure. Make sure to plan this before the day of your procedure.

If you don’t have someone to take you home, call one of the agencies below. They will send someone to go home with you. There’s usually a charge for this service, and you will need to provide transportation.
3 Days Before Your Procedure

An endoscopy nurse will call you between 8 AM and 6 PM 3 days before your procedure. The nurse will review the instructions in this guide with you and ask you questions about your medical history. The nurse will also review your medications and tell you which medications to take the morning of your procedure.

Use the space below to write them down.

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The Day Before Your Procedure

Instructions for eating and drinking before your procedure

- Do not eat anything after midnight the night before your procedure. This includes hard candy and gum.

- Between midnight and up until 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time, you may drink a total of 12 ounces of water (see figure).

- Starting 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time, do not eat or drink anything. This includes water.
The Day of Your Procedure

Things to remember

- Take only the medications you were instructed to take the morning of your procedure with a few sips of water.
- Don’t put on any lotion, cream, powder, makeup, perfume, or cologne.
- Remove all jewelry, including body piercings.
- Leave all valuables, such as credit cards and jewelry, at home.
- If you wear contact lenses, wear your glasses instead. If you don’t have glasses, bring a case for your contact lenses.

What to bring with you

- A list of the medications you take at home
- Your rescue inhaler (such as albuterol for asthma), if you have one
- A case for your glasses or contacts
- Your Health Care Proxy form, if you have completed one

Where to park

MSK’s parking garage is located on East 66th Street between York and First Avenues. If you have questions about prices, call 212-639-2338.

To reach the garage, turn onto East 66th Street from York Avenue. The garage is located about a quarter of a block in from York Avenue, on the right-hand (north) side of the street. There is a pedestrian tunnel that you can walk through that connects the garage to the hospital.

There are also other garages located on East 69th Street between First and Second Avenues, East 67th Street between York and First Avenues, and East 65th Street between First and Second Avenues.

Where to go

Your procedure will take place in the Endoscopy Suite at the main hospital, which is located at 1275 York Avenue. Take the M elevator to the 2nd floor and enter the Endoscopy Suite through the glass doors.
If you parked in MSK’s parking garage on 66th Street and York Avenue, follow the signs to the A elevator. Take the A elevator to the 2nd floor, then follow the signs to the M building and enter the Endoscopy Suite through the glass doors.

**What to expect**

After you arrive at the hospital, you will be asked to state and spell your name and date of birth many times. This is for your safety. People with the same or a similar name may be having a procedure on the same day.

When it’s time for your procedure, you will get a hospital gown to wear. A nurse will place an intravenous (IV) line in one of your veins, usually in your arm or hand.

**During your procedure**

You will get a mouth guard to wear over your teeth to protect them. If you wear dentures, you will take them out right before your procedure.

You will lie on your back or left side for the procedure. Once you’re comfortable, you will get medication through your IV that will make you relaxed and sleepy.

First, your doctor will use an endoscope to look at the area that’s blocked. An endoscope is a flexible tube with a camera that goes through your mouth and esophagus. If your doctor sees that your esophagus is narrow, they may need to dilate (widen) it before the stent is placed. This is done with special balloons or soft, flexible, rubber tubes.

After your esophagus is ready, your doctor will insert and position the stent with the help of fluoroscopy (a real-time x-ray). After the stent is in the right position, they will remove the balloons or rubber tubes so only the stent is left in place.

**After Your Procedure**

When you wake up after your procedure, you will be in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). You will get oxygen through a thin tube that rests below your nose called a nasal cannula. A nurse will be monitoring your body temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and oxygen levels.

You will stay in the PACU until you’re fully awake. Once you’re awake, your nurse
will bring you something to drink. Your doctor will talk with you about your procedure before you leave the hospital.

Your nurse will teach you how to care for yourself at home before you leave the hospital.

**Side effects**

- You may feel discomfort in your chest after your stent is placed. This is usually described as a feeling of pressure or soreness.
  - If you have pain, try taking a pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Your doctor may also prescribe other pain medication.
  - For some people, the pain is severe. If pain medications don’t help, tell your doctor or nurse. You may need to stay in the hospital for pain relief.
- You may have a sore throat for up to 24 hours after your procedure. Try sucking on lozenges and drinking cool liquids to soothe your throat.

**At home**

You can go back to doing your normal activities (such as driving and going to work) 24 hours after your procedure.

Follow the instructions below about eating and drinking during the first 2 days after your procedure.

- On the day of your stent placement, drink liquids. You can also have soup, oatmeal, or cream of wheat, but don’t eat any solid food.
- Don’t drink alcohol for 24 hours after your procedure.
- One day after your procedure, you can begin to eat soft foods.
- Two days after your procedure, you can eat solid foods.

**Eating with a esophageal stent**

Follow the instructions below for as long as your esophageal stent is in place.

- When you resume your normal diet, eat small pieces of food. Always chew them well before swallowing.
- Drink liquid with your meals to help food pass through the stent. Carbonated
drinks such as cola or ginger ale also help food pass through.

- Always eat in an upright (sitting) position. Gravity will help food pass through your esophagus and stent.
- You can swallow pills or capsules whole. Drink at least 4 ounces of water after swallowing them.

**Preventing reflux**

Reflux is a burning or full feeling pushing up from your stomach. Try the following things to prevent reflux.

- Stay in a sitting position for at least 2 hours after each meal.
- Sleep with the head of your bed raised to 30 to 45 degrees. You can use a wedge to raise the head of your bed. You can also use blocks to raise your bedframe at the head end.

**Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You Have:**

- Chest pain that doesn’t get better with acetaminophen or the medication your doctor prescribed
- Difficulty or pain while swallowing that lasts for more than 1 day
- Pain, bloating, or hardness in your abdomen (belly)
- Back or shoulder pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Black or dark stools
- Weakness or feel faint
- Nausea or vomiting or if you vomit blood
- Chills
- A fever of 101 °F (38.3 °C) or higher
- Any problem you didn’t expect
- Any questions or concerns

Esophageal Stent Placement
If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.