

Heartburn health check patient information leaflet

You have been given this information leaflet as you have been selected to have a heartburn health check. This is a quick test which involves swallowing a capsule (see information below). The test can help identify which patients may need further investigation.

It is entirely your decision whether to have a heartburn health check.

What is the purpose of a heartburn health check?

Many people experience heartburn and acid reflux. These can usually be managed with medication and lifestyle changes, for example avoiding eating heavy meals late at night or foods which may increase heartburn e.g. fizzy drinks, tomatoes and spicy foods. However, some people who have regular heartburn may develop a condition called Barrett's oesophagus. This is when cells in the food pipe (oesophagus) change shape. About 3-6 people in every 100 with regular heartburn develop Barrett's oesophagus. People with Barrett's have a slightly higher chance of developing oesophageal cancer and we know that earlier detection improves outcomes. For more information visit

<https://www.heartburncanceruk.org/>

What are the possible benefits?

By having this test, we hope to diagnose any abnormalities in the oesophagus easily and to start any necessary treatment as soon as possible. If you are diagnosed with Barrett's oesophagus or dysplasia (cell changes that may be a pre-cancerous condition), we will be able to offer treatment, which may include endoscopy (inserting a long, flexible tube down the throat and into the oesophagus) if needed, at an earlier stage.

What is involved?

An appointment will be arranged for you as an outpatient at a GP surgery. The test takes about ten minutes and you will receive the results within a few weeks.

The test will take sample cells and occasionally, as with many other tests, may need to be repeated.

If you take any medication that acts to thin your blood such as anti-clotting agents (e.g. heparin, warfarin, apixaban etc.) you may be asked to temporarily stop taking it before the procedure, your Nurse will advise you.

Please do not eat or drink for four hours before the test.

You may have small sips of water up to two hours before the test.

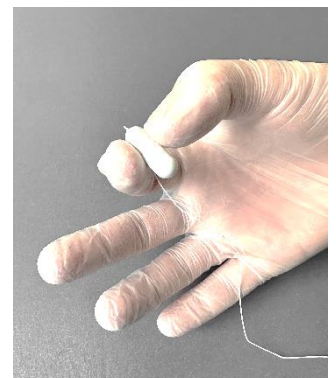
If this may cause you problems, please speak to your doctor (please continue to take any daily medication with a small amount of water).

If your test result suggests you need further investigation, this will be arranged for you.

What will happen at your appointment?

When you attend your appointment, a nurse will go through the test with you and answer any questions you may have. The nurse will then ask you to sign a consent form agreeing to the test.

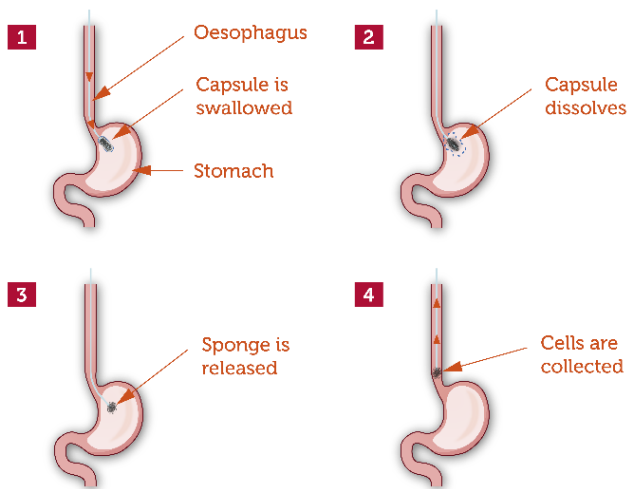
We may also ask whether you would be happy to be observed during the procedure.



*The picture shows the capsule which is similar in size to a vitamin pill and contains a small sponge inside a **plant based** capsule attached to a piece of strong, thin thread.*

You will be given warm water to drink and asked to swallow the capsule which contains a small sponge.

The capsule is left in your stomach for up to 7 minutes until it dissolves, releasing the sponge.



Graphic courtesy of Heartburn Cancer UK

The nurse will remove the sponge by pulling gently on the thread. As it is pulled out, the sponge collects a sample of the cells lining your food pipe (oesophagus).

At the appointment we will also ask you to fill in a questionnaire about your general health, lifestyle, and heartburn/acid reflux symptoms. You can complete this whilst you are waiting for the pill to dissolve.

We may ask for your consent to contact you later about taking part in an optional interview or a focus group a week or so after your test to talk about your experience with us. If you agree to take part in an interview, focus group or observation, your direct quotes may be included

in reports or publications. This will be done anonymously, so you cannot be identified. Don't worry, your treatment will not be affected if you do not want to take part.

Laboratory testing

The sample that you provide will be looked at in a Laboratory. It will also be tested by clinical or research teams to look for Barrett's cells and any sign of inflammation or cancerous changes.

The results of the test will be sent to your healthcare professionals who will share the results with you in about 4 weeks following your procedure and any necessary treatment will be discussed with you.

Are there possible side-effects or disadvantages of taking part?

- Over 15,000 people have had the test so far with no serious side-effects.
- Swallowing the capsule is not painful and most people have no problem doing so.
- Some people may experience a mild sore throat for 24 hours and in some people this may last for a few days. Paracetamol and throat lozenges will usually help.
- Following the test, you should be able to carry on with your day as normal.
- There is a very small risk (less than 1 in 5,000) that the sponge becomes detached from the thread or the nurse is unable to remove it. If this happens, you will be assessed and you may need to attend your local hospital for an endoscopy where the sponge will be easily removed.
- There is a very small risk that you may have some bleeding. If this happens, you will be assessed by the Doctor and clinical nurse. This is unlikely to need any intervention but if required an endoscopy at the local hospital could be performed to find and stop the bleeding. This has never been needed in 10+ years of tests.
- If you are referred for an endoscopy this is done in line with the standard NHS referral procedures.