

GASTRECTOMY

Dr Matley & Partners: Patient Information

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A gastrectomy is an operation to remove part of the stomach (partial) or the entire stomach (total). The small bowel is then joined to the remaining stomach or to the oesophagus. Your surgeon will discuss the procedure with you in detail and will answer any questions you may have before the operation.

WHY IS THIS OPERATION NECESSARY?

The commonest indication is for cancer. Other indications include benign (non cancerous) tumors, or complicated ulcers.

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS AVAILABLE?

For most types of cancers surgery is the first choice of treatment, for other conditions this is best discussed with your surgeon.

IS IT SAFE TO HAVE THIS OPERATION?

Your surgery will be performed by a team of highly qualified and skilled professionals who will take all steps necessary to ensure a safe procedure and a successful result. However there are risks involved with all surgery even if these risks may be small. Before you agree to the operation, you should consider the risks that may be involved.

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL RISKS INVOLVED?

There are risks for developing complications which are general and which may occur with any surgical procedure. These complications include the risk of infection, bleeding, pain, wound breakdown, deep vein thrombosis, or complications affecting the heart, lungs or kidneys.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC RISKS INVOLVED?

The main surgical complication is an anastomotic (suture site) leak. This occurs in less than 5% of patients. This can be life threatening and may require urgent repeat surgery. Other risks include bowel or splenic injury, bleeding, pancreatitis, delayed return of bowel function, wound infection, deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary emboli, atelectasis, pneumonia. Late complications may occur such as a suture granuloma or a hernia at the site of the wound.

WHAT ARE THE ANAESTHETIC RISKS INVOLVED?

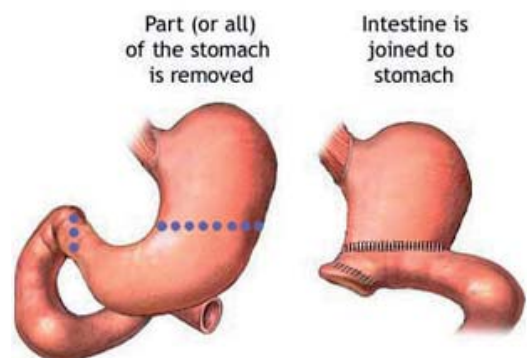
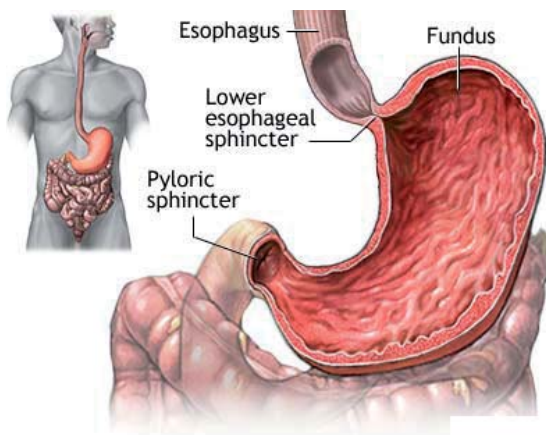
You can discuss the type of anaesthetic you will have with your anaesthetist and also the possible complications that may occur.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE THE OPERATION?

You should not eat or drink anything for at least six hours before your operation unless you are prescribed specific nutritional supplement. However, you should take all your regular medication as usual on the day. You will need to stop certain medication such as aspirin, warfarin, or other blood thinning medicines (including homeopathic medication) well before the operation. Please discuss this with your surgeon. This is often a busy period. You will require further investigations to assess your fitness for surgery and will need to see a physician/intensivist, the anaesthetist, often a nutritionist and occasionally an oncologist. It is always a good idea that you are settled at the home and work environment as well.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE OPERATION?

Please report to the hospital reception on time for your admission. Please bring along all the documents that may



These notes give an overall guide to your procedure. You may see some differences in the details of your treatment, since it is tailored to suit your own condition.

be required such as your medical aid card, ID and contact details. If you are not a member of a medical aid you will be required to pay a deposit or to sign an indemnity form. As far as possible we will try to advise you about hospital costs before your admission. It may be best to complete some of the documentation beforehand at the hospital pre-admission clinic to save time on the day of your admission.

When you arrive in the ward, you will be welcomed by the nurses or the receptionist and will have your details checked. Some basic tests will be done such as pulse, temperature, blood pressure and urine examination. You will be asked to hand in any medicines or drugs you may be taking, so that your drug treatment in hospital will be correct. Please tell the nurses of any allergies to drugs or dressings. The surgeon will have explained the operation and you will be asked to sign your consent for the operation. If you are not clear about any part of the operation, ask for more details from the surgeon or from the nurses.

In an adult the operation area may need to be shaved to remove excess hair. You may be issued with compression stockings that will help prevent blood clots in your legs. If you are having a general anaesthetic, the anaesthetist who will be giving your anaesthetic will interview and examine you and he may put up a drip or prescribe some medication to help you relax.

You will be taken on a trolley to the operating suite by the staff. You will be wearing a cotton gown. Wedding rings will be fastened with tape and removable dentures will be left on the ward. There will be several checks on your details on the way to the operating theatre where your anaesthetic will begin.

HOW LONG DOES THE OPERATION TAKE?

Usually takes between two to three hours

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WAKE UP?

After the operation is completed you will be transferred back to ICU or HCU ward. Although you will be conscious a minute or two after the operation ends, you are unlikely to remember anything until you are back in your bed on the ward.

You will have many tubes, lines and monitors – this is the routine, don't be alarmed. You will have an oxygen mask, an ECG, a sats monitor and a catheter in your bladder, a stomach tube, possibly a drain, a feeding tube and an epidural. You will also be fitted with stockings and may have foot pumps to reduce the risk of clotting in your legs.

WILL I HAVE PAIN?

Some pain may be present, but this should be controlled to a level of mild discomfort with the painkillers that are prescribed. Ask the nursing staff for medication if you have pain.

HOW SOON AFTER THE OPERATION CAN I EAT?

You will be allowed small amounts of fluid initially and gradually building up to being able to drink as much as you like and thereafter start eating – usually around day five after the operation

HOW SOON AFTER THE OPERATION CAN I GET OUT OF BED?

We will usually assist you into a chair the following day and on occasion the same day. You will be encouraged to mobilise as early as possible. The physiotherapist and

nursing staff will assist you.

HOW LONG WILL I STAY IN THE HOSPITAL?

5 to 10 days provided there are no complications

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I AM DISCHARGED FROM THE WARD?

Your surgeon will determine when you are ready to go home. You will be given some medication for pain and you may also need to take antibiotics for a few days after you go home. You will be given instructions on the dressings and how to care for the wound. You will also get an appointment for your follow-up in the surgeon's rooms. You should ask for a sick certificate if you need this for your employer.

WHAT SHOULD I BE AWARE OF WHEN I GET HOME?

You will be able to do your own day to day care ie, having a bath, walking without any aid or support.

Your appetite will be returning but will not be back to normal and you may have intermittent nausea. Eat small, regular light meals.

Bowel patterns tend to be irregular and may take a few weeks to return to normal.

Try and mobilise as much as you can, avoid excessive sleeping or sitting and build in regular gentle walks.

An operation of this magnitude is both physically and emotionally stressful. You feel tired and vulnerable and some people report that it takes 3 to 6 months to feel completely back to their normal selves.

HOW SOON CAN I START EXERCISE?

Mild exercise like walking or climbing stairs would be possible on discharge but anything more takes at least four weeks. Discuss this with your surgeon as there is a lot of individual variations.

HOW SOON CAN I DRIVE A CAR?

Usually 2 – 3 weeks. Discuss this with your surgeon as there is a lot of individual variations.

HOW LONG WILL I BE OFF WORK?

Most people need four weeks.

WHAT ABOUT PAYMENT?

The procedure and its associated costs will have been discussed with you, and a quote provided. Where procedures need to be unexpectedly altered during the course of the procedure, the fee may change. Similarly, emergency procedures may incur an additional cost.

Surgeons are highly trained, highly skilled professionals and throughout your care a member of the practice is available to attend to you 24 hours a day. In return we expect prompt payment of your account.

We do not submit accounts to medical aids.



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