

# Having a capsule sponge test to check for conditions related to the food pipe

## Department of Gastroenterology

Information for Patients

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### What is a capsule sponge test?

The NHS is starting this new test in a number of areas. It has been shown in clinical trials to be a simple, safe, and reliable method of finding diseases affecting the gullet or food pipe (oesophagus).

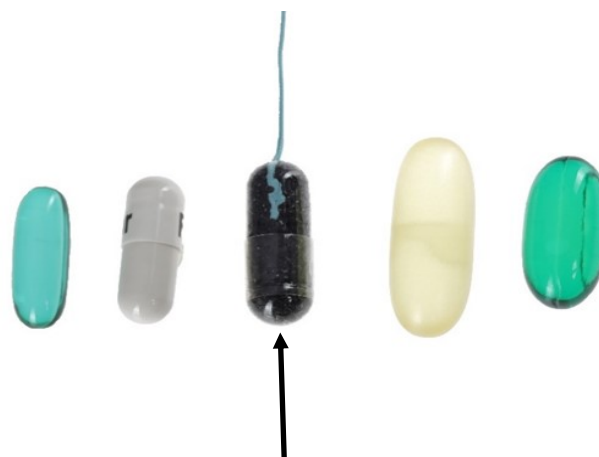
Your GP has referred you for a test with a camera to check your gullet and stomach (endoscopy) to understand your current symptoms.

Instead of endoscopy, which is often used to find these conditions, we are looking at the use of capsule sponge test.

If a patient meets the requirements for a capsule sponge test and is on the endoscopic waiting list, then the capsule sponge test will be offered in its place.

A capsule sponge is a small capsule on a string which you swallow. The capsule is a similar size to a vitamin tablet and is made from vegetarian gelatine.

- The capsule has a sponge.
- This is made to gather a sample of cells from the food pipe (oesophagus).
- These will be tested to find out if there are any cells which are unexpected or abnormal.



The capsule sponge is the middle capsule on a string.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## What are the symptoms?

Problems with heartburn and acid reflux are very common but sometimes this can lead to changes in the normal cells that line your gullet.

Very rarely these cells can change into pre-cancerous or cancerous cells. This may lead to cancer of the gullet (oesophageal cancer). Being aware of cell changes early on can make any treatment much easier and have less impact on you.

A capsule sponge test can help your doctor check and manage your symptoms.

## Before your test appointment

- You should keep taking all your usual medications.
- If you take any blood thinning medication please read the section for patients on page 5 of this leaflet. If you take warfarin you will need to have an INR test **7 days before** your capsule sponge test.
- If you have diabetes please make sure your appointment is a late morning appointment (as you cannot eat or drink for 4 hours before your appointment)
- If you have any questions about the test or find that you cannot keep your appointment, please contact the clinic, using the contact details on your capsule sponge test referral letter.

## On the day of your test

- You should have nothing to eat or drink for 4 hours before your appointment.
- Take your medication as normal, but with only a little water. Please bring a list of your medications with you to your appointment. If you are on blood thinners you will have had separate instructions.
- If you have diabetes please have a light breakfast early in the morning (at least 4 hours before your appointment) and take your usual medication.
- Remember to bring your consent form unsigned (explained on page 4)

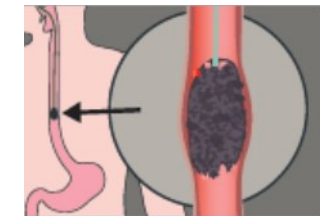
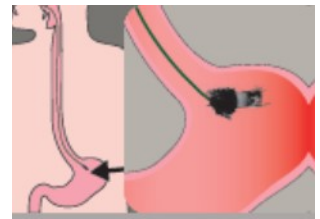
## At the hospital or clinic

- Please arrive on time for your appointment so that we can manage the number of patients in the clinic. Please do not come early for your appointment.
- Your appointment will last around 30 minutes.
- If you have any questions when you arrive, please ask your nurse or doctor when you are checking in.

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## What happens during the procedure?

1. You will be collected from the waiting room by one of the team. They will take you to the clinic area, your appointment will take up to 30 minutes.
2. You will be asked some questions to check that you are ready for your test and make sure you are comfortable.
3. You will swallow the capsule sponge test and string with some water. The end of the string is attached to a piece of card which the nurse will hold.
4. It will take around 7½ minutes for the capsule to dissolve, releasing the sponge in your stomach.
5. The nurse or doctor will pull up the sponge by the string. They will keep pulling till it comes out of your mouth. This will only take 1 or 2 seconds and should not be painful, but you may feel like the inside of your gullet is being brushed.
6. The sponge collects cells as it passes through your gullet.
7. After your test, experts will look at the sample to see if you have any signs of changes to the cells in the gullet.



You will be given the choice to have a local anaesthetic spray into your throat. This will numb the area before the sponge is removed, as some patients may find this step uncomfortable.

If you choose to have a local anaesthetic spray, the nurse will first make sure you do not:

- have any allergies,
- that you are not taking any medication that would cause this to be a problem.

## After your test

- You can go home straight after your test.
- If you have had a local anaesthetic spray, this causes a numbing in your throat which will soon go away. For safety reasons you will be told not to eat or drink for 20 to 30 minutes after the test. After this you can eat and drink as normal.
- If you have a sore throat after the test, suck a throat lozenge or sweet and take simple painkillers like paracetamol if needed.
- If your heartburn symptoms become worse, you should continue to take your heartburn medication as prescribed.
- It is very unlikely you will have any other symptoms. If you have any severe pain or bleeding you should contact the clinic using the contact details on your referral letter. Outside normal opening times, please call 111 telling them that you have had a capsule sponge test.

## How will you get your results?

The results of your test will be given to you either by telephone or by letter. We expect this to take around 2 to 3 weeks after your procedure.

If your capsule sponge test shows your cells are normal, this shows that there is no evidence of damage to the food pipe. You will continue with treatment, such as acid suppressants for your symptoms.

If the capsule sponge test finds any abnormal cells, this shows that there is some damage to the gullet. This will need further study with an endoscopy.

## What are the possible risks?

The capsule sponge test has not been found to have any serious side effects. Most people do not have any problem swallowing the capsule. If you do have a problem, we will not continue with the test.

- You may have a mild sore throat which might last up to 48 hours after the test.
- There is a very small risk (less than 1 in 1000) that the string may break away from the sponge or it may be difficult to remove the sponge. If this happens it is not painful or dangerous, but you will have an endoscopy to remove the sponge (the same procedure you were originally referred for)
- There is a very small chance that you may have bleeding. This may be more likely if you are on blood thinning medication. If this happens please call us using the contact details on your referral letter. Outside normal opening times, please call 111 telling them that you have had a capsule sponge test.
- Like all tests, the capsule sponge may not always find all abnormalities. On very rare occasions, a serious abnormality might not be found. If you have any questions about this, please contact the clinic using the contact details on your capsule sponge referral letter.

## Are there any other options to capsule sponge test?

The capsule sponge procedure has been proven in clinical trials to be a simple, safe and effective way of finding out conditions related to the food pipe. It is being used in your hospital as another option to endoscopy for low risk patients.

If you decide not to have a capsule sponge test then an endoscopy will be offered. There is currently a high number of patients waiting on lists for endoscopy procedures after the Covid-19 pandemic and the wait times can be long.

If you would like to talk about other options, please speak to your doctor.

## Asking for your consent

- If you decide to go ahead with the capsule sponge test we will ask you to sign a consent form on the day.
- This says that you agree to the test and that you understand what will happen.
- You should make sure you have read and understood all the information you have been given.
- Once you have decided to have the test, bring the consent form with you to your appointment where it can be completed and signed before your procedure.

## How will my data be protected?

Any member of NHS staff who has access to your confidential information is bound by NHS England confidentiality regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA2018).

You can find more about data protection and the way NHS England handles and stores personal data here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/data-protection-policy-v5.1.pdf>

## Alert for patients on blood thinning medicines

During the phone call where your visit was booked, you should have been given clear guidance on what to do with any blood-thinning medications you take that might affect your ability to clot. Contact the clinic using the information on your capsule sponge test referral letter if you have not received this information or if you have any questions.

### Warfarin

- You will need to have an INR test the week before your capsule sponge test.
- Your INR has to be 3.5 or less when you have the capsule sponge test.
- If your INR is within your target range then continue with your usual dose.
- If your INR is not within your target range, please contact your anticoagulant clinic for advice as your dose may need to be adjusted.
- If your INR result is above 3.5 contact your anticoagulant clinic or GP for advice.

## Other blood thinning tablets

Please note if you take the following blood thinning medication:

**For the capsule sponge test you DO NOT need to stop taking:**

- Clopidogrel
- Aspirin
- Prasugrel
- Ticagrelor

**You do need to stop any other anticoagulants the day of your capsule sponge test.**

- Rivaroxaban
- Apixaban
- Edoxaban
- Dabigatran

If you take any blood thinning medication not listed here, please call the endoscopy department for advice. Restart your medication the day **after** your capsule sponge test. Continue with your usual dose.

## Frequently asked questions

### How will Covid-19 affect my appointment?

You do not need to be tested for Covid-19 before your appointment. If you develop any symptoms or have a positive Covid test then please rearrange your appointment.

### What should I wear to my appointment?

Wear your normal clothes.

### What if I forget my consent form?

Do not worry. The nurse will have extra forms.

### Will the test hurt?

The test should not be painful, you may feel like the inside of your food pipe is being lightly brushed.

## Contact details

If you are not able to make your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible. We may be able to offer it to someone else. If you need to talk about your appointment please contact:

- Leicester General / Leicester Royal / Glenfield Hospital - Endoscopy booking team on 0116 258 3910 (10am to 4pm).
- Loughborough / St Luke's / Hinckley / Melton Hospital - Endoscopy booking team on 01509 564402.

Any concerns or problems on the day after the procedure please call the nursing teams on:

- Leicester General Hospital: 0116 258 4183
- Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 6997
- Glenfield Hospital: 0116 258 3130
- Hinckley and District Hospital: 01455 441970
- Loughborough Hospital: 01509 564406
- Melton Mowbray Hospital: 01664 854904
- St Luke's Hospital Market Harborough: 01858 448344

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

જે કુર્મીં સિંહ જાહવારી કિમે હેર જામ્મા હિંચ ચાહુંદે હે, ઝાં કિરખા વરવે હેઠાં હિંચે ગાદે નંબર 'હે ટેલીફોન વરે।  
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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