

Information for Patients

We recognize that undergoing GI endoscopic procedures provokes anxiety in some patients and this involves a great degree of trust of the GI health care team. The Gastroenterology department is committed to developing a thorough understanding of your medical issues and of you to make your procedure a positive and safe experience.

Frequently Asked Questions and Concerns

1. What are the main complications of moderate sedation procedures?

- All of the medications we use have a possible impact on blood pressure, respiration, muscle tone, consciousness, and metabolism. A designated RN (Registered Nurse) will be monitoring your body's function during the procedure and will have additional fluids and medications prepared to maintain physiologic stability.

2. What are the potential risks of an endoscopic procedure?

- All procedures carry potential risk. The most common though still rare, are bleeding, infection or perforation (a tear in the intestine).

3. What are the things my doctors and nurses must absolutely know?

- Known medical problems
- Medications including herbal medicines
- Allergies to medicines
- Prior surgeries and prior experiences with anesthesia or sedation
- If during a prior surgery or procedure anyone told you that you have a "difficult airway"
- If you have any implanted pacemaker, stimulator or drug pump, please let the doctors or nurses look over whatever card or other information you received in connection with that procedure.

4. What if I am pregnant or not sure?

- Please advise your Primary Care Provider. A simple pregnancy test can be conducted and the results can be used to better understand the various risks and benefits of having a procedure.

5. Why does everyone read my arm band and ask my name and social security number, do they know what they are doing?

- Multiple checks assure that the right procedure and medicines are paired with the right patients. Although rare, medicine swaps and wrong site surgery can be further prevented with multiple checks.

6. If I had some food by accident, should I keep this to myself?

- No; please advise a nurse, doctor or other staff member. Safe timing of sedation and procedures depend on knowing when food and liquids are ingested.

7. Can I be harmed by sedation?

- Unlike antibiotics or other disease modifying agents, sedation drugs are not intrinsically therapeutic; they are used to facilitate relaxation and comfort during procedures and do have side effect. Like other drugs, allergies and other unplanned reactions can occur, but are rare. Respiratory depression can result from pain medicines, and this is figured into plans for post procedure observation and recovery.

8. What happens if I come for my procedure and I don't have a driver?

- You will be offered two options: you may have the procedure without sedation or you may reschedule at a later time when you have a driver available. For Palo Alto GI Unit: If you have difficulty finding a driver, Hometel may be scheduled when you reschedule for your procedure. Hometel needs to be reserved 30 days prior to your appointment.

9. What happens if I come for a colonoscopy procedure and I have not finished the laxative prescribed?

- You will be offered two options: you may reschedule the procedure or if the GI Unit's schedule allows, you will be offered additional laxative to drink and the procedure will be completed later that day.

10. What do I do if I lose my instructions on how to prepare for my exam?

- We mail patients the printed instructions for their preparation. If you lose your instructions, please find printable copies at <http://www.paloalto.va.gov> under Health Care Services-Gastroenterology Service. If you are scheduled at the Palo Alto Division GI Unit you may call 650 493-5000 x66313 for instructions to be mailed to you again. If you are scheduled at the Livermore Division GI Unit you may call 925 373-4700 x35015 for instructions to be mailed to you again.

11. What if the instructions on the bottle of Golytely laxative solution are different from what you gave me?

- Please follow the instructions mailed to you directly from our office. Do NOT follow the preprinted pamphlet that is attached to the bottle of Golytely. The instructions on the Golytely bottle are different from the instructions we mail to you and will not provide you with an adequate preparation for your colonoscopy procedure.

12. What are the symptoms of complications from a procedure?

Complications from a gastroenterology procedure **are rare**, especially when specially trained physicians are performing them.

However, should you experience any of the following symptoms after a procedure, contact us immediately.

Following a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Fever and chills
- Rectal bleeding (bleeding from biopsies and polyp removals can occur several days after the procedure)

Following an upper intestinal endoscopy

- Fever
- Difficulty swallowing
- Increasing throat, chest, or abdominal pain