

E04lite ERCP

This document will give you information about an ERCP. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is an ERCP?

An ERCP (endoscopic retrograde cholangio-pancreatogram) is a procedure to look for any problems in your bile duct or pancreatic duct using a flexible telescope and x-ray dye.

Gallstones in the bile duct or a narrowing of the bile duct are common problems, both of which can cause jaundice (the skin turning yellow in colour).

If the endoscopist (the person doing the ERCP) finds a problem, they may be able to treat it during the procedure.

Are there any alternatives to an ERCP?

There are other ways of looking at the bile duct, such as a scan called an MRCP, or a technique called endoscopic ultrasound. If you have a problem in your bile duct, an operation may be an alternative to an ERCP.

What does the procedure involve?

The endoscopist will give you a sedative to help you relax.

An ERCP usually takes between half an hour and three-quarters of an hour. The procedure involves placing a flexible telescope (endoscope) into the back of your throat and down into your stomach. From here the endoscope will pass on into your duodenum.

The endoscope is then positioned to look at the papilla (see figure 1). A fine tube is placed through the endoscope and into the bile duct or pancreatic duct through the papilla. X-ray dye is injected into the ducts and x-ray pictures are taken that show the ducts.

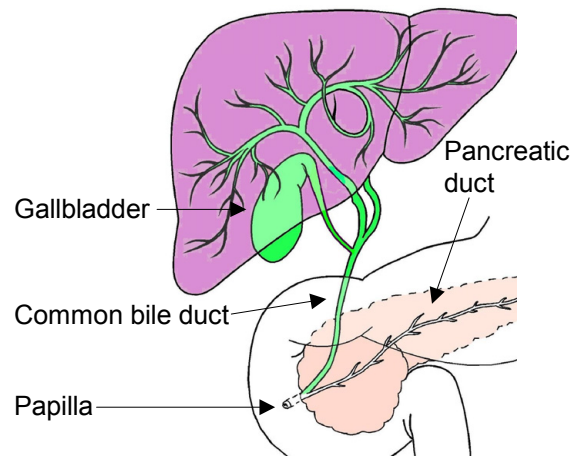


Figure 1

The bile duct system and pancreatic duct

If there are gallstones in the bile duct, they can usually be removed.

The endoscopist can insert a tube called a stent to relieve jaundice caused by large gallstones or by a narrowing of the bile duct.

What complications can happen?

- Infection of the bile duct (cholangitis)
- Making a hole in the oesophagus, stomach or duodenum
- Bleeding
- Damage to teeth or bridgework
- Allergic reaction
- Breathing difficulties or heart irregularities
- Inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis)
- Incomplete procedure

How soon will I recover?

If you were given sedation, you will normally recover in about an hour. You may feel a bit bloated for a few hours but this will pass.

You may be able to go home the same day.

A member of the team will tell you what was found during the ERCP and will discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

You should be able to go back to work two days after the ERCP.

Summary

An ERCP is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if you have a problem with your bile duct or pancreatic duct and treating your symptoms.

Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169 and at www.gosmokefree.co.uk
- www.eatwell.gov.uk – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- www.eidoactive.co.uk – for information on how exercise can help you
- www.aboutmyhealth.org - for support and information you can trust
- British Society of Gastroenterology at www.bsg.org.uk
- Digestive Disorders Foundation at www.digestivedisorders.org.uk
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 - textphone)
- www.eidohealthcare.com

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