

Having a patency capsule test as a trial run before a capsule endoscopy

Department of Endoscopy

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: April 2025

Next review: April 2026

Leaflet number: 888 Version: 4

What is a patency capsule test?

For a patency capsule test you swallow a dissolvable capsule. It is coated with barium. Barium shows up on an X-ray. This test can be done as a trial run before potentially having a capsule endoscopy procedure. In a capsule endoscopy you swallow a capsule with a tiny camera inside. This lets us see the inside of your digestive tract.

Why do I need a patency capsule test first?

A patency capsule test is widely used as a trial run. We do it if there is a risk that the real capsule might get stuck (retained). This might happen if there is a problem in your gastrointestinal tract (GI) tract, for example if you have Crohn's disease.

An X-ray is done as part of the test. It will show us if a real capsule will get stuck (retained) in your small intestine.

How is the test carried out?

You will need to visit the hospital 2 times.

- Day 1 you swallow the capsule.
- Day 2 you come back the next day to have an X-ray.

We will ask you to come back to the Endoscopy Department. You need to collect an X-ray form. This is around 29 hours after swallowing the patency capsule.

The X-ray will show if the capsule is still in the body or not. If the capsule is still in your body, it will dissolve on its own after 30 hours. It will not cause you any harm.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit 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

Diabetic patients

If you are diabetic please call the department on 0116 258 6997. We can advise you on how to manage your diabetes during this procedure.

What instructions do I need to follow?

It is important that all patients follow the instructions below:

The day before the test:

- Have lunch as normal before 2pm, no more food after this.
- Have clear fluids only after 2pm, until midnight. This includes water, squash, fizzy drinks, black tea or black coffee, boiled sweets.

The day of the test:

- Have no food or drink before the appointment. You can take any medicines you need up to 2 hours before the appointment. You can take them with sips of water.
- Please go to the Endoscopy Department for the time of your appointment. We aim to keep waiting times to a minimum but it depends on how busy we are. Please expect to be with us for 1 to 2 hours. It may be longer during busy periods. We also do emergency procedures. These can take priority over our outpatient appointments.
- You will swallow the patency capsule with a small amount of water. You can then go home.
- You can have clear fluids 2 hours after swallowing the capsule.
- You can have a light snack 4 hours after swallowing the capsule.
- After 5pm you can eat and drink as normal.
- Do not lie down through the day. Please stay fairly active with plenty of walks.

The day after swallowing the patency capsule:

- Please come to the Endoscopy Department **29 hours** after you have swallowed the capsule. You need to collect an X-ray form. The capsule starts to dissolve after 30 hours. You need to return by 29 hours to get a form and make sure you have the X-ray taken in time.
- We will direct you to the X-ray Department to have an X-ray of your tummy (abdomen). It will show if the patency capsule has passed through your body. After this you can go home.
- We will call you in a few days once the X-ray has been looked at by a doctor.

Getting to your appointment

For patients who meet eligible criteria, a patient transport service is available if you need transport to and from your appointment. This service is provided by [EMED Patient Care](#). To make a booking

contact the service on 0300 777 1800, or arrange this through your GP, at least 3 days before your appointment.

When will I get the results?

We will contact you with the results of the test within a few days. If you have not heard from us within 3 days please call the department on 0116 258 6997 (Monday to Sunday, 9am to 6pm).

What will the results mean?

If the patency test shows us that your GI tract lets an object the size of the real capsule pass through normally, then in the next 2 weeks you will go on to have your capsule endoscopy procedure. We will send you details of this soon.

If the patency test shows that the real capsule would have been stuck or “retained”, then you will not go on to have a capsule endoscopy. Your doctor will be in touch with you.

What do I need to look out for?

If you do not pass the capsule it will dissolve on its own. It will not cause you any harm.

If you are not sure that the patency capsule has passed out of your body and you develop any unexplained tummy pain, nausea or you start being sick, please contact:

- Endoscopy Department on 0116 258 6997 (Monday to Sunday, 9am to 6pm).
- For out of hours, you can contact Ward 42 on 0116 258 6284.

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

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk