



# Barrett's Oesophagus

## Information for patients from the Trust's Endoscopy Units

### What is Barrett's Oesophagus?

The oesophagus (gullet) is the tube that carries food from your mouth to your stomach and is made up of a particular type of cell called squamous cells. In Barrett's Oesophagus, these cells will have changed into columnar cells similar to those found in your stomach.

### What causes Barrett's Oesophagus?

The cause of this is generally thought to be due to acid from your stomach refluxing, or spilling back up into your oesophagus. Prolonged contact of this stomach acid on to your oesophagus can make it sore and inflamed and this may lead to Barrett's Oesophagus.

Barrett's Oesophagus is more common in men than women and also more common in overweight people. Smoking has also been shown to speed up changes to Barrett's Oesophagus.

### What are the symptoms?

Barrett's Oesophagus often has no symptoms. However, most people with Barrett's Oesophagus will have been examined because of symptoms of gastro-oesophageal reflux such as heartburn or a salty taste in the back of the throat called water brash.

### How is Barrett's Oesophagus diagnosed?

Barrett's Oesophagus is diagnosed by a test called a gastroscopy. During the gastroscopy a small sample of the lining of your gullet would have been taken and will have confirmed your diagnosis. For more information on what happens during a gastroscopy see the Trust's **Gastroscopy** leaflet available from a member of staff or through the Trust web site [www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/endoscopy-leaflets/](http://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/endoscopy-leaflets/)

For many patients with Barrett's Oesophagus, surveillance gastroscopies are recommended. These can range from every six months to every five years and are where biopsies (tissue specimens) are taken from the Barrett's Oesophagus to make sure there are no pre-cancerous cells which may need treatment.



### What if my condition is left untreated?

Barrett's Oesophagus can lead to several complications including ulceration, bleeding, and narrowing of the gullet leading to difficulty in swallowing. A very small percentage of Barrett's Oesophagus may go on to develop into cancer.

If there are any complications from Barrett's Oesophagus, there are various treatments that may help.

### What treatment options are available?

Treatment options may include the following.

- **Drugs** can suppress the production of acid in your stomach. This will lessen the amount of acid available to reflux into your gullet.
- **Lifestyle changes** which may help to reduce your symptoms include:
  - losing weight if necessary
  - eating smaller meals at regular intervals
  - avoiding a full meal before lying down or going to bed; and
  - avoiding tight clothing around the waist and bending or stooping.
- Some patients may benefit from **surgery** to reduce the reflux.

If you have been diagnosed with Barrett's Oesophagus you will discuss the options available to you with your consultant or nurse endoscopist before any treatment begins.

## Any further questions?

Please phone the **Endoscopy Unit**. The units are open Monday to Sunday 8am to 6pm.

- William Harvey Hospital, Ashford Telephone: 01233 61 62 74
- Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury Telephone: 01227 78 30 58
- Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Margate Telephone: 01843 23 43 70

If you have any questions between 6pm and 8am Monday to Sunday then contact the **Emergency Department** on:

- William Harvey Hospital, Ashford Telephone: 01233 61 62 07
- Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Margate Telephone: 01843 23 50 30

A short film outlining what patients can expect when coming to hospital for an endoscopy is available on the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/endoscopy/](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/endoscopy/)

Our units are regularly inspected and audited; please ask if you want any information about our performance standards. You can also visit [www.patientopinion.co.uk](http://www.patientopinion.co.uk)

### This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)