

## Balloon Enteroscopy – Patient FAQs

### What is a balloon enteroscopy?

Balloon enteroscopy is a specialised endoscopic procedure used to examine and treat the small bowel (small intestine), which is difficult to access with standard gastroscopy or colonoscopy.

A thin flexible camera with an overtube and balloon system is used to carefully advance through the small bowel. This allows your specialist to diagnose and sometimes treat abnormalities deep within the intestine.

### Why might I need a balloon enteroscopy?

Your doctor may recommend balloon enteroscopy for:

- Obscure gastrointestinal bleeding or iron deficiency anaemia
- Abnormal findings on capsule endoscopy, CT scan, or MRI
- Suspected small bowel polyps, tumours, ulcers, or inflammation
- Evaluation of Crohn's disease involving the small bowel
- Retrieval of retained capsule endoscopes
- Treatment of bleeding lesions within the small bowel

### What is the difference between antegrade and retrograde balloon enteroscopy?

There are two ways to perform balloon enteroscopy:

#### Antegrade balloon enteroscopy

- The procedure is performed through the mouth
- It examines the upper and middle portions of the small bowel
- Preparation is similar to a gastroscopy (usually fasting only)

#### Retrograde balloon enteroscopy

- The procedure is performed through the rectum
- It examines the lower portion of the small bowel
- Preparation is similar to a colonoscopy and requires bowel preparation

The choice depends on where the abnormality is suspected to be located based on prior tests such as capsule endoscopy or imaging.

### What treatments can be performed during balloon enteroscopy?

In many cases, treatment can be performed during the procedure, including:

- Treatment of bleeding blood vessels (angioectasias)
- Removal of selected polyps
- Biopsies
- Dilatation of narrowed areas (strictures)
- Retrieval of retained capsule endoscopes

This may help avoid surgery in some patients.

### Will I be asleep for the procedure?

Yes. Balloon enteroscopy is typically performed under deep sedation or general anaesthesia to ensure comfort. You will be monitored closely throughout the procedure by an anaesthetist and nursing staff.

### **How long does the procedure take?**

The procedure is more complex than standard endoscopy and usually takes between 45 minutes and 2 hours depending on the indication and findings.

### **What are the risks of balloon enteroscopy?**

Balloon enteroscopy is generally safe, but as with any medical procedure, complications can occur.

Potential risks include:

- Bleeding
- Perforation (tear in the bowel wall)
- Pancreatitis (rare, mainly with antegrade procedures)
- Reaction to sedation or anaesthesia
- Abdominal discomfort or bloating after the procedure

Your specialist will discuss these risks with you before the procedure.

### **What preparation is required?**

Preparation depends on the type of procedure:

#### **Antegrade procedure**

- Usually fasting for at least 6 hours before the procedure

#### **Retrograde procedure**

- Full bowel preparation similar to colonoscopy

You will receive detailed instructions prior to your procedure.

### **Can I go home the same day?**

Most patients go home the same day after a short recovery period.

Because sedation or anaesthesia is used:

- You must arrange for someone to drive you home

You should not drive, operate machinery, or make important decisions for 24 hours

### **Are there alternatives to balloon enteroscopy?**

Alternative investigations may include:

- Capsule endoscopy
- CT enterography
- MRI enterography
- Standard gastroscopy or colonoscopy

However, balloon enteroscopy has the advantage of allowing direct treatment and tissue sampling when required.