

Patient information factsheet

Having a capsule sponge test (EndoSign®)

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor has recommended that you have a capsule sponge test (also known as EndoSign®). It explains what a capsule sponge test is and what the test involves so you know what to expect. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Important information

Do **not** eat or drink anything, except sips of water, for **four hours** before your capsule sponge test.

What is a capsule sponge test?

A capsule sponge test is a test to examine the health of the oesophagus (food pipe). It involves swallowing a capsule (about the size of a cod liver oil or vitamin tablet) containing a soft sponge attached to a thread, that is designed to collect cells from the oesophagus.

Why should I have a capsule sponge test?

Your doctor may have recommended you have a capsule sponge test if you have:

- long-term acid reflux (where stomach acid flows back up into the oesophagus)
- Barrett's oesophagus (a condition where some of the cells in the oesophagus grow abnormally, usually due to long-term acid reflux)

In a small number of people with Barrett's oesophagus, the cells in the lining of the oesophagus can develop further abnormal changes called dysplasia, which can increase the risk of oesophageal cancer.

The capsule sponge test can help your doctor to:

- look for signs of Barrett's oesophagus or irritation caused by acid reflux
- check the lining of your oesophagus for any abnormal cell changes (dysplasia)
- decide if you need to have a gastroscopy (a procedure that involves passing a thin, flexible tube with a camera built into its tip down your throat and into your oesophagus)
- provide reassurance if no abnormal changes are found

What are the benefits of a capsule sponge test?

A capsule sponge test:

- is performed as an outpatient (this means you do not have to stay in hospital overnight)
- is safer and less invasive than a gastroscopy
- is quicker than a gastroscopy
- does not require sedation (medication that makes you drowsy)

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Are there any risks?

Over 20,000 capsule sponge tests have been performed across the UK so far, with no serious side effects reported.

Most people (around 95%) are able to swallow the capsule. However, if you find it very uncomfortable, we will not continue with the test, and you may need to have a gastroscopy instead. We will discuss this with you in more detail, if applicable.

Very rare risks (affecting less than 1 in 2,000 people)

- The sponge may become detached from the thread or it may be too difficult to remove the sponge. If this happens, you will need to have a gastroscopy the same day as the test to remove the sponge.
- Minor bleeding which will usually stop on its own.

Like all tests, the capsule sponge test may not always find all abnormalities. On very rare occasions, a serious abnormality may not be identified. It is important to note that this test does not detect problems or abnormalities of the stomach or duodenum (the first part of the small intestine) or even oesophageal problems not directly related with Barrett's oesophagus or acid reflux. If you have any questions about this, please contact us.

Are there any alternatives?

It is your choice whether to have the capsule sponge test. If you choose not to have the test, you will remain on our gastroscopy waiting list, as it is important to check for any changes in the cells of your oesophagus. However, please note that there is a longer waiting time for a gastroscopy. We will contact you in due course to arrange a date for this procedure.

You may also choose not to have any tests at all.

If you are unsure or have any concerns about having a capsule sponge test or gastroscopy, please discuss this with your consultant (doctor) or nurse specialist at your clinic appointment.

How should I prepare for the test?

Eating and drinking

Do **not** eat or drink anything, except sips of water, for **four hours** before your test.

If this is likely to cause you any problems, please speak to your general practitioner (GP) or contact us for advice before your test.

Medication

You should continue to take your usual medications with a small amount of water.

If you have **diabetes** or take **blood-thinning medications** (for example, warfarin), please contact us as soon as possible before your test, as we may give you different advice or additional instructions.

What will happen before the test?

The test will be performed by a nurse in the endoscopy unit.

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Consent

When you arrive at the endoscopy unit, we will explain the test to you in detail, including the benefits and risks, and answer any questions you may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the test, we will then ask you to sign a consent form. It is important that you fully understand what you are agreeing to. If anything is unclear, please ask us.

Data protection

For this test, we will need to send your capsule sponge sample and any relevant associated patient and medical information to an external company called Cyted to process. This data will be sent, processed and stored securely on NHS and Cyted laboratory systems. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

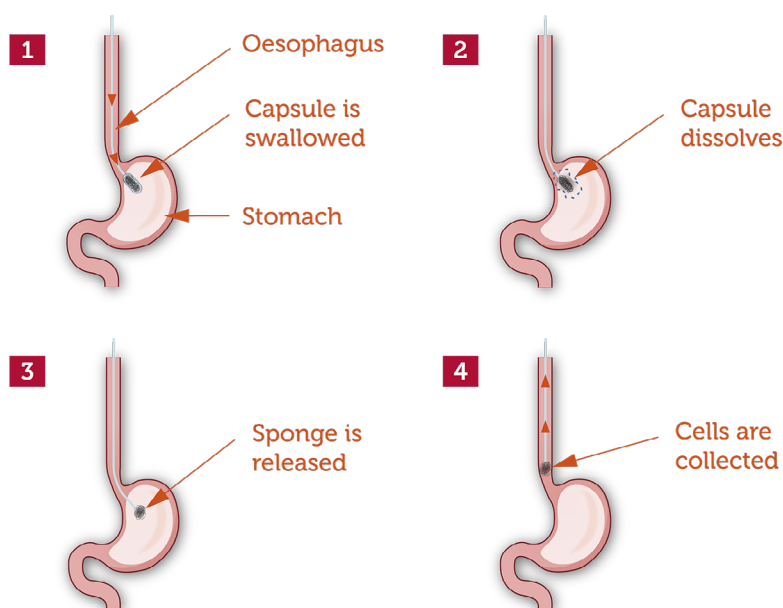
What will happen during the test?

We will give you a glass of warm water to drink and ask you to swallow a capsule (about the size of a cod liver oil or vitamin tablet) containing a small sponge attached to a strong, thin thread. To make the capsule easier to swallow, we will use an applicator (a plastic device) to place the capsule at the back of your tongue.

The outer shell of the capsule is made from vegan gelatine which is designed to dissolve in your stomach within seven minutes, releasing the sponge. While the capsule dissolves, we may ask you to fill in a questionnaire about your general health, lifestyle, and heartburn or acid reflux symptoms.

After seven minutes, we will remove the sponge by gently pulling on the thread (this process takes one or two seconds and should not be painful). As we pull the sponge out, it will collect a sample of cells from the lining of your oesophagus. We will then place the sponge in a container and send it to an external company called Cyted for testing in a laboratory. The EndoSign® clinical team will check your sample for signs of inflammation and any abnormal cell changes.

For more information about what will happen during the test, please see the diagram below.



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How long will the test take?

The test itself takes around 10 minutes, but the appointment usually lasts about 30 minutes in total.

What will happen after the test?

At the end of your appointment, we may ask for your consent to give us some feedback about your test. Please note that this is optional and your treatment will not be affected if you do not want to take part.

You can eat and drink straight away and resume your normal activities.

It is common to have a mild sore throat for a few hours. You can take paracetamol or use throat lozenges to help ease any discomfort. Remember to always read the instructions included with the medication before taking it.

Before you leave hospital, we will give you a separate aftercare advice factsheet which contains more information about what to expect after your test and who to contact if you have any concerns.

When will I receive the results?

The laboratory will send your results to the doctor who requested you have the test. A member of your clinical team will then contact you, usually four to eight weeks after your test, to give you your results and discuss further plans. They will also send a copy of your results to your GP.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns while you are in the endoscopy unit, please speak to a member of the healthcare team caring for you.

If you have any non-urgent questions or concerns after you leave hospital, please contact your GP or the endoscopy unit for advice.

Endoscopy unit

Telephone: **07500 761793** (every day, 8am to 6pm)

Gastroenterology Barrett's oesophagus secretary

Telephone: **023 8120 4965** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Outside of these hours, please contact NHS **111** for advice.

Useful links

www.heartburncanceruk.org/capsule-sponge-test

https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/shorthand_story/meet-the-capsule-sponge-test

Image courtesy of Heartburn Cancer UK

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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