

Education

Esophageal Dilation with Bougies

What is esophageal dilation with bougies?

Esophageal dilation with bougies is a procedure in which your health care provider tries to widen a part of your esophagus. The esophagus is the tube that carries food from your throat to your stomach. Cone-shaped tubes called bougies will be used to widen your esophagus.

When is it used?

This procedure is used when you are having trouble swallowing due to a problem that is causing the esophagus to narrow.

As an alternative you could choose not to have treatment, recognizing the risks of your condition. You should ask your health care provider about this choice.

How do I prepare for esophageal dilation with bougies?

Plan for your care and recovery after the procedure. Arrange for someone to drive you home afterwards. Allow for time to rest and try to find people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers heal more slowly after surgery. They are also more likely to have breathing problems during surgery. For this reason, if you are a smoker, you should quit at least 2 weeks before the procedure. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery. Also, your wounds will heal much better if you do not smoke after the surgery.

Your provider may tell you to not eat or drink for several hours before the procedure. Follow any other instructions your provider may give you.

What happens during the procedure?

A local anesthetic and a sedative are given to help you relax. A local anesthetic is a drug that should keep you from feeling pain during the operation. Your health care provider places increasingly larger cone-shaped tubes into the narrow part of your esophagus. The tubes remain in place for about 15 seconds. You may have a feeling of pressure while the tubes are lodged in your esophagus. This may stretch the surrounding tissue and create a wider passageway.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be observed for about a half hour. You should not drive or do anything that requires coordination or quick response for 4 hours after the procedure, so someone should drive you home.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

You may be able to swallow more easily.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- A local anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia.
- Acid from your stomach could back up into your esophagus and cause an irritation.
- Your esophagus may tear and need repair.
- Your esophagus may become narrow again and this procedure may need to be repeated.
- You may have infection or bleeding.

You should ask your health care provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You have trouble breathing.
- You have chest or abdominal pain.

Call during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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