



## Gastrointestinal Endoscopy in Dogs

Your dog has been scheduled for an endoscopic examination. The purpose of this procedure is to make a diagnosis of the disease that has been causing your pet's clinical signs of vomiting or diarrhea.

### ***What is an endoscope and how is it used?***

An endoscope is a flexible tube that is inserted into either the stomach or the colon or both. The endoscope permits viewing of the inside of these organs. If the stomach is being examined, the esophagus can be inspected en route.

### ***What diseases are diagnosed with an endoscopic examination?***

The endoscope allows full color viewing of the esophagus, stomach, the upper part of the small intestine, or the colon. Areas of inflammation or ulceration are easily seen. Masses and strictures are also visible. Foreign bodies (bones, toys, rocks, coins, hairballs, etc.) may also be identified or retrieved.



### ***Can the diagnosis be made just by viewing any abnormalities?***

While seeing an abnormal lesion or suspicious area gives us valuable information, most cases will require that the suspicious area be biopsied to determine the diagnosis. The endoscope has a tiny channel through which a biopsy instrument can be passed. Precise biopsies can be taken of any abnormal areas.

### ***What do you do if there are no abnormal areas?***

Many diseases cause changes that can only be detected by microscopic inspection of the cells. Therefore, even if the organ appears normal, biopsies are taken. In many cases, biopsy of the stomach of a vomiting dog or of the colon of a dog with diarrhea will be very helpful in determining if disease is present.

### ***What if the problem is in the small intestine?***

The endoscope can be passed through the valve at the lower end of the stomach (pylorus) and into a short segment of the small intestine (duodenum) in some dogs. This depends on the size of the dog and the size of the endoscope. However, the vast majority of the small intestine is not accessible to endoscopy. Most diseases of the small intestine require other diagnostic tests to be performed.

### ***Can cancer be diagnosed with endoscopy?***

In many cases, yes. However, some tumors do not affect the lining of the stomach or colon. The biopsy procedure only samples the lining or *mucosa*, so it is possible that a tumor that involves the deeper parts of the intestinal tract will not be detected.

### ***What steps need to be taken to prepare for endoscopy?***

It is vital that the stomach and intestinal tract be empty of food and fecal matter. If the stomach is to be examined, withholding food and water for twelve hours is generally sufficient. If the colon is to be examined, oral medication is begun twelve to eighteen hours before the procedure to remove fecal material from the entire intestinal tract. Fasting for twelve to eighteen hours is also important so that new fecal material does not form. On the morning of the procedure, one or more enemas are given to remove any remaining stool from the lower intestinal tract.



### ***Is anesthesia required?***

Yes. Passing an endoscope into a dog's stomach or colon is not possible or safe in a conscious dog. Most patients will require only a short-acting anesthesia to perform endoscopy.

### ***When will I know the results of the examination?***

Since the organs are viewed in real time, the result of what is seen is known immediately. However, the diagnosis is not available in many cases until the results of the pathologist's study of the biopsies are reported. This will take anywhere from a day to a week depending on the location of the pathologist and whether or not special tests are required on the tissue.

---

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM.  
© Copyright 2005 Lifelearn Inc. Used with permission under license. May 12, 2014*