Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Gastrointestinal endoscopy is done when it is important to see the inside of the stomach or intestines. Gastrointestinal endoscopy involves placing a thin tube-like instrument through the mouth or the back passage, the rectum, and down into the gullet, or esophagus, stomach or intestines. The tube is able to carry pictures back to a video screen or camera. When endoscopy is done through the mouth, it is called upper endoscopy or esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD for short). When endoscopy is done through the rectum, it is called lower endoscopy or colonoscopy.

Common reasons for its use and benefits:

- **Bleeding** - The most common reason for gastrointestinal endoscopy is to find the source of bleeding from the esophagus, stomach or intestines. Sometimes, if the source is found, doctors can use the endoscope to stop the bleeding.
- **Tumors** - Sometimes tumors can cause discomfort or even clog the esophagus, stomach or intestines. The endoscope can be used to find tumors and take a small sample for analysis in the lab, called a biopsy.
- **Diarrhea** - Sometimes severe diarrhea can be caused by inflammation or infections of the colon and endoscopy can be used to help find the cause.
- **Belly pains** - Sometimes severe stomach pain can be a sign of ulcer, a clog in the gastrointestinal track, inflammation or infection. Endoscopy can help find the reasons for some belly pains.

Risks:

Some of the risks of gastrointestinal endoscopy include:

- **A low blood pressure (called hypotension)** – Frequently, medicines are given to help keep patients comfortable during endoscopy. Some patients develop brief drops in the blood pressure during endoscopy. Such drops can be life-threatening and can be a reason for stopping endoscopy before it is finished.
- **Leak of gastrointestinal contents** - Rarely, the esophagus, stomach or intestines can be damaged by the endoscope and the contents can leak into the surrounding area of the body. This is a serious problem which can cause infection and even death.
- **Bleeding** - The esophagus, stomach or intestines can be damaged by the endoscope causing some internal bleeding.

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