

Pregnancy & breastfeeding in gastrointestinal endoscopy

If clinically indicated, endoscopy is safe in pregnancy. However, we will try and time the endoscopy to be during the second (2nd) trimester.

Before having an endoscopy, it should be discussed with your treating obstetrician. Your obstetrician may recommend monitoring of the baby during the procedure.

Here are some signs or symptoms where an endoscopy in pregnancy might be indicated:

- A large episode of vomiting blood or symptoms of continuous gastrointestinal bleeding (e.g. blood in your stool).
- severe or non-stop nausea/vomiting/abdominal pain.
- difficulty or pain when swallowing food or liquids.
- severe diarrhoea with no evidence of infection.

There are no studies looking specifically at pregnant or breast-feeding patients.

The following is expert guidance:

- The European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy released guidelines in 2019, suggesting that interrupting breastfeeding may be an option.
- The 2020 guideline from the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, recommended that:
 - 1) breastfeeding can be resumed after a single dose of midazolam, once the mother has recovered after the procedure.
 - 2) expressing and discarding of breast milk (i.e. “pumping and dumping”) after anaesthesia is not required. However, you are free to make your own decision on this.
- The British Society of Gastroenterology 2024 guidelines on sedation in GI endoscopy contain the following statements:
 - 1) Studies have shown virtually undetectable levels of midazolam (a benzodiazepine sedative medication) in the breastmilk 7 hours after administration.
 - 2) Similar results were seen in fentanyl (an opioid sedative medication), with very low levels detected in the breast milk.
 - 3) Local anaesthetic throat spray (for gastroscopy only) – safe in pregnancy and breast feeding.

References:

ESGE Guideline 2019 – *Bowel preparation for colonoscopy*

https://www.esge.com/assets/downloads/pdfs/guidelines/2019_a_0959_0505.pdf

Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain & Ireland - *Guideline on anaesthesia and sedation in breastfeeding women 2020*

<https://anaesthetists.org/Home/Resources-publications/Guidelines/Anaesthesia-and-sedation-in-breastfeeding-women-2020>

British Society of Gastroenterology – *British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines on sedation in gastrointestinal endoscopy*

<https://gut.bmj.com/content/73/2/219>