

Esophageal Manometry

What is esophageal manometry?

The esophagus is the tube that conducts food from your mouth to stomach. Food propulsion is accomplished by muscles in the wall of the esophagus squeezing in a coordinated fashion. In some people, the muscles do not function properly, or may squeeze too hard. Patients often complain of difficulty swallowing. Manometry is a method by which muscle contraction can be measured. Esophageal manometry allows the muscles of the esophagus to be examined for coordination of contractions and pressure of squeeze.

The second important feature of esophageal manometry involves the connection between the esophagus and stomach. A small ring of muscle at the connection site called the lower esophageal sphincter can be too tight or too loose, contributing to heartburn, pain and other symptoms. Esophageal manometry allows measurement of this muscular ring.

Why have this test?

Your doctor may request this examination if you have swallowing problems, heartburn, regurgitation, chest pain, lump in your throat, or are planning to have anti-reflux surgery. There are other tests to evaluate the esophagus, such as gastroscopy and upper GI, but only manometry allows for pressure measurements. Many times manometry will be used in combination with these other tests to define your medical problem.

How do I prepare for the test?

Preparation is simple, and requires that you have nothing to eat or drink for 6-8 hours prior to the exam. Your physician will provide these details. You may also be asked to stop certain medications on the day of the test, or several days prior. Again, your doctor will give you instruction.

Procedure

A thin tube smaller than a straw is passed through the nose into your esophagus. While lying flat, you are asked to swallow multiple times, both dry (saliva only) and wet (sips of water). Pressure measurements are taken during the swallows. The tube is then removed, and you can return to normal daily functions. The computer will generate a graphic representation of your swallows. Your doctor will analyze the graphs and provide you an interpretation of your swallowing function.