

What is balloon endoscopy?

There are two types of balloon endoscopy: single balloon and double balloon.

Single balloon endoscopy

For single balloon endoscopy, a 200 cm long flexible, fiberoptic, endoscope (a hose-like tube one centimeter in diameter with a light and a camera on the tip) is fitted with an equally long overtube that slides the full length of the endoscope. On the tip of the overtube is a balloon that can be blown up and deflated. The balloon when blown up is used to anchor the overtube within the intestine. While the overtube is anchored, the endoscopy can be advanced further into the small intestine. By withdrawing the overtube the small intestine can be shortened and straightened to make the passage of the inner endoscope easier. The balloon may then be deflated so that the overtube can be inserted further and the endoscope advanced again. The endoscope itself is a standard endoscope with working channels that allow the intestine to be inflated with air, rinsed with water, or to guide biopsy or electrocautery instruments to the tip of the endoscope.

What to expect with balloon endoscopy

Balloon endoscopy, like other gastrointestinal endoscopy, requires intravenous sedation. The procedures are long, often requiring 1-3 hours. The most important complications of balloon endoscopy are perforation of the small intestine or bleeding either due to insertion of the endoscope or use of therapeutic instruments.