

PATIENT INFORMATION

Understanding Barrett's esophagus

From diagnosis to follow-up, in partnership with your clinician.

General Information

Gastroesophageal reflux occurs when contents normally found in the stomach are regurgitated (refluxed) back into the esophagus. Symptoms of this condition include heartburn and chest pain. If left unchecked, reflux can change the lining cells of the esophagus (metaplasia), which is the hallmark feature of Barrett's esophagus. While Barrett's esophagus is often asymptomatic, it is nevertheless a serious condition associated with an increased risk of cancer. Early detection and treatment of Barrett's esophagus is essential as it can eventually progress to esophageal cancer. The American College of Gastroenterology recommends that patients with symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux undergo an endoscopic evaluation for the presence of Barrett's esophagus.

Complications

Longstanding Barrett's esophagus may lead to precancerous changes (dysplasia) or even outright cancer. Typically, Barrett's esophagus progresses from no dysplasia to low-grade dysplasia to high-grade dysplasia to cancer. The risk of esophageal cancer in patients with Barrett's esophagus is quite low, approximately 0.2-0.5 percent per year (1 out of 200- 860 people). Follow-up endoscopy for Barrett's esophagus is required to screen for dysplasia or cancer, as well as to determine the efficacy of the medical treatment (see Treatment below). The follow-up interval will be determined by grade of dysplasia.

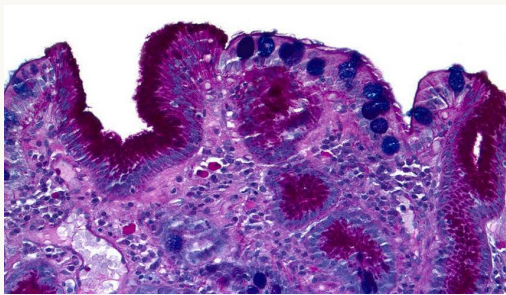
Treatment

The treatment of your gastroesophageal reflux is the recommended method of managing your Barrett's esophagus: treatment options can include lifestyle changes and prescription medication to control acid and surgery. The best treatment option for you should be determined by you and your gastroenterologist.

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Histology, closer up.

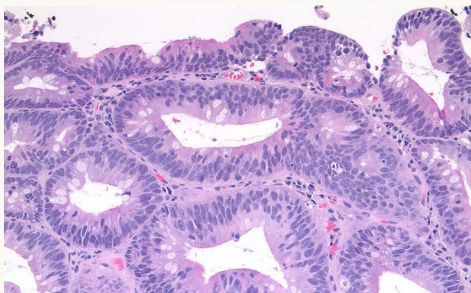
Images from the original APS handout, shown in their original order.



01

No dysplasia

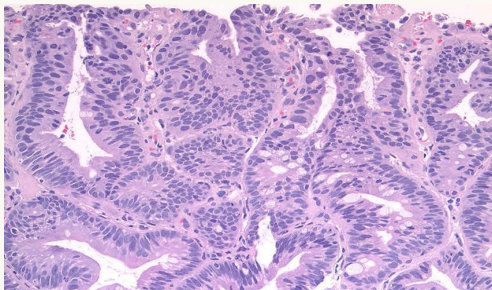
Barrett's esophagus



02

Low-grade dysplasia

Barrett's esophagus



03

High-grade dysplasia

Barrett's esophagus

Educational wording and histology images retained from the original APS handout. Discuss your findings and follow-up plan with your treating clinician.