

Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice), abdominal pain, and clay-colored stools are signs that you may need an endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP). This advanced procedure allows the board-certified gastroenterologists at Pioneer GI Clinic to examine and treat the small ducts that connect the gallbladder and pancreas to your small intestine. To schedule an appointment, call the office in Anchorage, Alaska, or book an appointment online today.

What is ERCP?

ERCP is a procedure that gives your provider the ability to examine, diagnose, and treat problems in your pancreatic and bile ducts. Pioneer GI Clinic performs an ERCP using an endoscope, a long, flexible device they can guide through your GI tract.

Endoscopes carry a video camera that sends images from inside your GI tract to a monitor. After using the camera to examine the tissues, your provider can treat problems by guiding specialized tools through the scope.

When would I need ERCP?

You may need ERCP when your symptoms or the results of diagnostic tests suggest problems in the common bile duct or pancreatic duct.

Common bile duct

Your gallbladder produces bile and sends it into the common bile duct. The common bile duct then carries bile to the small intestine. Your body uses bile to digest fats.

Pancreatic duct

Your pancreas supports digestion by producing enzymes that break down carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. The enzymes go into the pancreatic duct, travel into the common bile duct, and then into the small intestine.

Health conditions that affect the ducts include:

- Gallstones

- Bile duct tumors
- Bile duct cysts
- Pancreatic cancer
- Infections
- Pancreatitis
- Cholecystitis
- Scarring (sclerosis)

The conditions in this list block the ducts, causing bile and enzymes to accumulate in the gallbladder and pancreas.

How do I prepare for ERCP?

Pioneer GI Clinic gives you specific instructions to follow before your scheduled ERCP. You may need to stop taking certain medications. You also need to stop eating and drinking before your ERCP.

How is ERCP performed?

Your provider sprays a local anesthetic in your throat and gives you IV sedation to help you relax. Then they guide the endoscope through your mouth, esophagus, and stomach, and then into the small intestine.

When the scope reaches the small intestine, they find the openings to the ducts and thread a catheter into the tiny tubes. For the next step, they send dye into the ducts and take X-rays. The dye highlights the structures and reveals problems in the ducts.

What treatments happen during ERCP?

Your Pioneer GI Clinic provider may:

- Perform a biopsy
- Insert a stent
- Open blocked ducts
- Break up and remove stones

- Remove a tumor

The ERCP procedure takes 30-60 minutes, depending on the type of treatment you need.

If you have questions about ERCP or need to schedule an appointment, call Pioneer GI Clinic or use the online booking feature today.