A gastroscopy is a medical procedure allowing the doctor to examine the lining of the oesophagus, the stomach and the first part of the duodenum with a gastroscope (a flexible tube).

What is expected of you?
For a gastroscopy to be carried out properly, the oesophagus and stomach need to be empty.

When the examination is scheduled in the morning:
- Do not have anything to eat or drink from midnight of the night before the examination.
- You may also not smoke for a few hours before the examination.

When the examination is scheduled in the afternoon:
- You may have a light breakfast in the morning. The following is understood to be a light breakfast: 1 slice of toast and 1 cup of tea or coffee. This breakfast must be taken at least six hours before the appointed starting time of the examination.
- You may also not smoke for a few hours before the examination.

What you have to take into account:
The examination is mostly carried out under sedation (light calmative).
It is recommended to arrange for someone to collect you and drive you home after the examination or alternatively to be accompanied and travel by public transport.

The examination:
Any dentures will need to be removed. The throat is numbed with a spray (xylocaine) to suppress the gag reflex. In most cases, a sedative (Valium or Dormicum) is also given by an injection into a vein. The gastroscope is a flexible tube, which is inserted through the throat and guided into the oesophagus. Some air is passed down the gastroscope to distend the oesophagus, the stomach and the duodenum and allow the doctor to have a clear view. This may make you feel that you want to burp. If necessary, the doctor may need to take some biopsies (small tissue samples) for subsequent analysis under a microscope in the laboratory. This is done painlessly.

Is a gastroscopy safe?
Even though a gastroscopy is a relatively safe procedure, there is always a small risk. If there is still food in the patient’s stomach, he/she may choke on it during the examination, for example because he/she brings it up when burping. If the food goes into the windpipe, this may cause the patient to develop a chest infection.
After the examination:
You may have a sore throat, but this feeling generally subsides quite quickly. When the throat is numbed, there is an increased risk of choking. It is therefore better not to eat or drink anything until half an hour after the examination. This can be tested by having a sip of water. If you do not choke, it means that you can eat. If you do choke, however, wait another half hour and try again with a sip of water. If you were given a sedative, you should not drive or undertake potentially dangerous activities within the first few hours.

Your results:
After the examination, the doctor will discuss his findings with you. A report will also be sent to your general practitioner and/or the referring doctor. The results of the biopsies generally arrive at your general practitioner’s about a fortnight later.