

AGA recommends bidirectional endoscopy for most patients with iron deficiency anemia

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The American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) published new clinical guidelines outlining an evidence-based approach for the initial gastrointestinal evaluation of chronic iron deficiency anemia in asymptomatic patients. Iron deficiency anemia is extremely common worldwide, and a gastrointestinal cause should be considered in all patients without an obvious cause for their anemia.

"Iron deficiency anemia is encountered commonly in [clinical practice](#), yet there is significant practice variability among physicians evaluating these patients," said Cynthia W. Ko, lead guideline author from University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle. "We're pleased to introduce this guideline, which will walk gastroenterologists through the recommended management of these patients to ensure we find and address early any underlying risk of serious diseases and provide the best possible outcomes for our patients."

Key guideline recommendations:

1. AGA strongly recommends that clinicians carefully document the presence of each iron deficiency and anemia prior to endoscopic evaluation.
2. AGA strongly recommends that gastroenterologists perform bidirectional endoscopy on asymptomatic men and [postmenopausal women](#) with [iron deficiency anemia](#). AGA conditionally offers the same recommendation for premenopausal women and encourages shared decision making with these patients. If a patient has GI symptoms, diagnostic evaluation should be tailored accordingly. EGD/colonoscopy (or [colonoscopy](#)/EGD) should be performed at the same sitting.
3. Perform non-invasive testing for *Helicobacter pylori* and celiac disease in [asymptomatic patients](#) with iron deficiency anemia prior to bidirectional endoscopy. If positive, begin treatment. AGA recommends against performing routine gastric or duodenal biopsies if non-invasive tests are negative.
4. In uncomplicated asymptomatic patients with iron deficiency anemia and in whom no source of potential blood loss is identified after initial evaluation with bidirectional endoscopy and non-invasive testing, a trial of iron supplementation is recommended before routine evaluation of the small bowel with video capsule endoscopy.

More information: Cynthia W. Ko et al, AGA Clinical Practice Guidelines on the Gastrointestinal Evaluation of Iron Deficiency Anemia, *Gastroenterology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2020.06.046](https://doi.org/10.1053/j.gastro.2020.06.046)

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