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UNDERSTANDING ESOPHAGEAL VARICEAL BLEEDING

A Patient & Family Guide to Portal Hypertension Complications

Understanding Esophageal Varices

Esophageal varices are enlarged veins that develop due to portal hypertension. These veins can become fragile and may bleed, which can become life-threatening if severe.

Why Variceal Bleeding Happens

As portal pressure increases, blood attempts to bypass the liver through alternative pathways. This increased pressure can enlarge veins in the esophagus and stomach.

Signs of Bleeding

Symptoms may include vomiting blood, black stools, dizziness, weakness, confusion, or fainting. Significant bleeding is considered a medical emergency.

How Bleeding Is Treated

Treatment often involves endoscopy, medications to reduce portal pressure, ICU-level supportive care, blood transfusion when needed, and in selected cases, TIPS placement.

When TIPS May Be Considered

TIPS may be recommended in patients with recurrent or severe bleeding despite medical and endoscopic management.

Family Questions

- Is bleeding likely to happen again?
- How serious is portal hypertension?
- What foods or medications should be avoided?
- What follow-up is needed after hospitalization?

Educational material intended for patients and families. Individual treatment recommendations depend on clinical evaluation and multidisciplinary care.