



Flexible Sigmoidoscopy- Patient Information Sheet

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is an examination of the left side of the large bowel (the colon) using a flexible instrument called a colonoscope. This is introduced into the colon via the back passage. An image is projected from the tip of the colonoscope on to a screen.

Reasons for having this examination

Diagnostic - the doctor or nurse specialist can see any abnormalities;

Investigative - to take samples from the lining of the bowel (biopsies) for further tests in the laboratory;

Treatment - abnormalities such as polyps (small bumps in the bowel lining) removed;

Surveillance - to re-examine any previous problems.

Preparation for the examination

For this examination to be successful your bowel must be as empty as possible.

You will need to follow a low residue diet the day before the test (see below for suggestions)

You will have an enema to clear the lower bowel. You can give this yourself at home, or it can be given when you come to the Endoscopy Unit. Information on giving yourself an enema at home is given at the end of this information sheet.

Occasionally a more thorough preparation is needed with laxatives, starting the day before the examination. In this case you will be given the necessary instructions.

You should not eat or drink anything for two hours before the appointment.

You can continue to take any medications as usual except iron tablets and any medicines that can cause constipation such as Codeine Phosphate or Loperamide, which you should stop taking seven days before the procedure.

The procedure can be performed if you are taking Warfarin or other blood thinning medication, as long as you tell us that you are taking it. If you are

taking warfarin, you will be asked to have a blood test to check your blood clotting the day before the procedure.

Please bring your completed medical assessment form and the consent form, which you should have read and may have signed, with you to the Endoscopy Unit.

Please bring a dressing gown and slippers with you.

On arrival at the hospital

Please go straight to the Endoscopy Unit and ring the bell to let the staff know that you have arrived.

You may have to wait for a short while, so it is a good idea to bring something to read.

A nurse will go through your medical history with you, check

The nurse will go through the consent form with you, to confirm that you understand the procedure and agree to go ahead with it, and the form should be signed.

If you have not already had the enema at home, this will now be given to you.

We will give you a hospital gown to change into and you can wait in the reception area in your own dressing gown until you are taken to the examination room.

A nurse will remain with you throughout the examination.

The examination

You will lie comfortably on your left side on an examination couch.

The doctor or nurse specialist will gently pass the flexible tube into your large bowel via the back passage.

Some air is passed into the bowel to expand it to allow for a clear view. This can cause some discomfort but it will not last. This can make you feel as if you want to go to the toilet but be reassured this will not happen. The air will be sucked out at the end of the test.

A biopsy (a small sample of the bowel lining of tissue) may be taken during the examination to be sent to the laboratory for further tests. This does not cause pain.

Occasionally polyps are found in the bowel and can be removed. This again is painless but can result in bleeding from the lining of the bowel when the polyp has been removed. This bleeding usually settles down quickly.

The examination usually takes 5 - 10 minutes. You may experience some abdominal pain and may be offered Nitrous Oxide gas to relieve it, if you have previously agreed to its use. The effect of the gas wears off quickly; but you will not be able to drive for 45 minutes following the procedure.

It is unusual that a sedative injection is necessary for this examination. You can discuss this with your doctor. However if

After the examination

You will be able to get dressed and will be offered refreshments.

If you have had sedation, you will rest for about an hour in the Unit and then be offered refreshments.

The nurse will tell you the result of the examination before you go home. You may be given a copy of your examination report. Any biopsy results will take longer.

You will be told what further tests, treatment and / or follow up visit are needed.

After your examination you may still have wind. This will pass and you do not need to take any medication for it.

A report and any biopsy results will be sent to your GP and we will send you a copy of any biopsy results.

Going home

As soon as you feel ready you may go home and resume your normal diet and activities.

Exceptions

If you had the sedative injection, you must have a responsible friend or relative to take you home and stay with you for 24 hours. If this is a problem please telephone the endoscopy booking office on 01582 497273 as soon as possible. You must not drive, drink alcohol, operate machinery or make important decisions for 24 hours following the test with sedation.

If you had the Nitrous Oxide gas, you must allow 45 minutes to pass before you drive.

What are the risks?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a very safe examination, but there can be a very small risk of the following:

A perforation (a small tear) in the wall of the bowel. This is a rare occurrence which may require an operation to repair it.

Bleeding (risk less than 1 in 5,000 cases) following a biopsy. If polyps are removed there can be more significant bleeding (risk of 1 in 500) which usually settles down and very rarely needs admission to hospital. If it occurs you should go to your local Emergency department.

Are there any alternative procedures?

Barium x-rays and scans can image the lower bowel but are not as accurate as a flexible sigmoidoscopy, Biopsies cannot be taken and procedures cannot be performed with x-rays and scans.

For further information

Please telephone the Nurse-In-Charge of the Endoscopy Unit on **01582 497298** (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

Or you can go to www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk