

# Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

This leaflet explains more about your flexible sigmoidoscopy and what you can expect when you come to hospital. It also details the instructions on how to prepare for this test, including what tablets you may need to stop.

## What is a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a camera examination of the lower bowel. It helps to find the cause of your abdominal symptoms and to diagnose and treat diseases of the intestine. The procedure takes approximately 10 minutes, but please allow two to three hours in the hospital for the process to be completed. The procedure is usually done without sedation as it is a brief and well tolerated test but sedation or Entonox (gas and air) can be given on request.

## What are the risks?

The test is very safe, but very rarely there can be a problem, for example:

- There is a small risk of missing polyps (small growths) or other abnormalities. It is very rare to miss cancer.
- When a biopsy is taken or a polyp is removed, there may be bleeding on rare occasions.
- Perforation, which is a tear in the wall of the colon is also very rare (< 1:5000 risk). If this happens it would require a short stay in hospital including treatment with antibiotics and possibly surgical repair.

## Are there any alternatives?

For some conditions it may be possible to perform a CT scan. The disadvantage of this is that in many cases it is not as good at detecting disease and that a biopsy cannot be taken. The radiation involved in a CT scan is also unsuitable for some patients.

## If my symptoms have stopped should I still come for the test?

**Yes.** It is important that you still come for the test. Your doctor has organised this test to ensure you have no problems in the lower part of your bowel. Although the symptoms may have gone, it remains important to examine this area.

## How do I prepare for my flexible sigmoidoscopy?

- In order to complete the procedure, your bowel needs to be empty. You will need to have an enema before your appointment. The enema makes you go to the toilet to empty your lower bowel. The enema will be given at the hospital.

- Do not eat for 30 minutes before your appointment time or until you've had your procedure. You can drink water but no other liquids. **Please note:** If you opt to have sedation you must not eat for six hours prior to your appointment and stop drinking water two hours before.
- If you are taking blood thinning medications such as Warfarin, Apixaban, Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor or Prasugrel, please contact us on the phone numbers on Page 4 of this leaflet under **Contact us**.
- Take other medications as normal, except iron tablets which should be stopped one week before your examination.

## On arrival at the endoscopy unit

- A nurse will check your details, including medications and allergies.
- The test will be explained again and you will be asked to sign a consent form.
- You will be given a gown.

## Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

## What happens during flexible sigmoidoscopy?

- The flexible sigmoidoscope is gently inserted via your anus into the lower bowel. Air is introduced. You may feel discomfort as if you want to go to the toilet and short lasting cramps can occur.
- A biopsy (tissue sample) may be taken or a polyp (small growth on the bowel wall) may be removed during these tests. You cannot usually feel this but you can often visualise what is happening.

## Will I feel any pain?

You may feel some discomfort from the air that is pumped into the large bowel so that the endoscopist can view the lining adequately as well as some mild cramping. This is not usually painful. Sedation, if requested, can be given. It consists of an injection before the procedure that causes relaxation. Entonox (gas and air) is available as an alternative.

It gives a short lasting pain relief and patients can go home unaccompanied 30 minutes later. It is not suitable for patients with certain lung conditions or who have had certain eye/ear procedures.

## What happens after flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Most patients can go home immediately after the examination, however if you have had Entonox or sedation you will be taken to the recovery area where you will be monitored for 30 to 45 minutes. After this you will be able to get dressed and have some refreshments. If you have had sedation you must be accompanied home by a responsible adult. If you have had no sedation or Entonox only, you can leave alone. A nurse will give you a copy of the endoscopy report as well as some important discharge advice.

## Results / Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Upon completion of the test the findings will be discussed with you. We will be able to tell you of any visual findings, however any samples will need to be sent to the laboratory for testing. This can take up to three weeks. A copy of the report will be sent to your GP. If required, a follow up appointment will be organised.

## Useful sources of information

<https://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/bowel-cancer-flexible-sigmoidoscopy.aspx>

including further explanation with video about flexible sigmoidoscopy.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your examination please contact us:

**020 7952 1468**

**info@ramwellsurgicalservicesltd.co.uk**