

Flexible sigmoidoscopy

Please read this on receipt and bring it with you when you come for your examination

ABOUT THE EXAMINATION

Sigmoidoscopy is a visual examination of the lower part of the large bowel, including the rectum. The procedure usually takes 10-20 minutes and you can have sedation if you wish. The doctor steers a thin flexible tube containing a miniature TV camera around the lower part of the colon, while watching an image of the interior of your bowel on a TV monitor. Biopsy samples of the lining can be painlessly taken for laboratory analysis.

Polyps, which are abnormal growths of tissue often shaped somewhat like a mushroom, can be removed painlessly using a wire lasso which is passed through the instrument.

PREPARATION

To allow a clear view of the lower end of your bowel, a nurse will give an enema when you come for your appointment. Please warn us well in advance if you are diabetic or take anticoagulants.

Do not take any iron preparations for seven days before the examination. No other preparation is required. You can continue to take aspirin, vitamin supplements (with low iron content) and prescription medicines, even on the day of the examination. The examination need not be delayed because of a menstrual period.

If you are taking Warfarin or Clopidogrel (Plavix) contact your cardiologist or anticoagulant clinic at least two weeks before your procedure as your medication will need to be modified.

If you are diabetic please consult whoever manages your diabetes for adjustments to your medication before your procedure.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The doctor or nurse will explain the procedure, and answer your questions. The admitting nurse will go through your medical history and check that you are correctly prepared. You will be asked to sign a consent form giving permission for the examination. You will need to put on a hospital gown.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The doctor or nurse will explain the procedure, and answer your questions. The admitting nurse will go through your medical history and check that you are correctly prepared. You will be asked to sign a consent form giving permission for the examination. You will need to put on a hospital gown. Most patients do not need sedation for this examination. If you choose to have sedation, it will be given by injection through a cannula in a vein in the hand or arm. This will make you sleepy and relaxed.

While in a comfortable position on your left-hand side, the doctor will pass the endoscope into the rectum and lower part of your colon. If you have sedation you will need to rest in the department for up to 45 minutes or so after the procedure. If you do not have sedation, you can leave immediately and eat and drink when you wish.

RISKS

Before you agree to this procedure you should be aware of the reasons for which it is being proposed, the alternatives and the problems that can occur. No procedure or treatment is totally risk free, but the risks of flexible sigmoidoscopy are usually far less than those of the alternatives and the benefits usually far outweigh the risks.

The main risks are perforation or tearing of the bowel and bleeding, which are more common when the procedure involves removal of polyps. Audit shows that these problems occur in less than 1 in 1000 examinations in this unit. If bleeding occurs, observation and admission to hospital may be required. The bleeding usually stops spontaneously. Bleeding that does not stop, or bowel perforation may require surgery, but this is extremely rare.

INFORMED CONSENT

Why do we need your consent? No one has the right to impose examinations or treatment on you without your agreement.

What does it mean? Your doctor will have told you about the procedure, possible alternatives and any substantial risks, so that you can decide for yourself whether or not to agree to the flexible sigmoidoscopy. There is further information in this pack. Before signing the consent form you should be satisfied that you have been given all the information you require. Please feel free to discuss any aspects of the proposed examination with the nursing staff and the doctor in the endoscopy unit. If you do decide to go ahead, you are at liberty to change your mind, even after signing the consent form.

Consent form Please read the attached consent form carefully. You will be asked to sign a similar form on the day of the procedure so that there is a record of your understanding and agreement. You can ask any further questions on the day. Please bring these documents and the consent form **unsigned** to the appointment.

AFTERWARDS

If you have sedation, a companion must be available to go home with you. We suggest you stay at home for the rest of the day. In any event, you should not drive a car, operate machinery or make important decisions for 24 hours. If you do not have sedation, you can return to normal activities, including eating and drinking, as soon as you wish.

HELP AND ADVICE

If you have any questions or problems, please contact the sister-in-charge on 020 7616 7760 on weekdays during normal hours. For out of hours enquiries please call The London Clinic on 020 7935 4444 and ask for Bleep 014 (24 hours).