

Patient advice sheet

Having a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy – pre-procedure information

You have been advised by your GP or hospital doctor to have an investigation known as a flexible sigmoidoscopy.

Please read all the information in this booklet carefully as failure to follow instructions may result in your test being cancelled.

Appointment

Please phone the endoscopy department at the earliest opportunity on **01296 315175** if the date or time is not convenient to you so that we can reschedule your appointment.

Consent

All procedures undertaken in hospital, require your consent, this is a legal requirement.

Please read this information sheet carefully as it provides all the information you need to make an informed choice including the risks associated with your procedure.

Following your admission, one of the endoscopy specialist nurses will explain your procedure and go through the risks associated with it, giving you the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. Once you are completely happy with the information provided, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Please note you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

Some procedures require tissue samples to be taken for microscopic examination. Rather than destroying the samples after this examination we ask your permission to use these tissue samples for teaching and research purposes. All specimens are treated anonymously.

Your signed consent form is held in our hospital notes. Should you wish to have a copy we can organise a photocopy for your personal records.

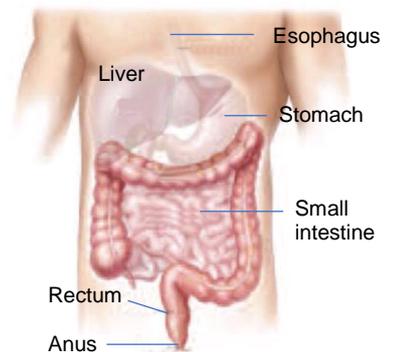
If you do not speak English, an independent translator must be available to ensure you properly understand the test. This should not be a member of your family or a friend. The procedure will be cancelled if a proper consent cannot be taken.

This information sheet enables you to make an informed decision before agreeing to the procedure.

What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is an investigation using a flexible tube to look accurately at the lining of part of the large bowel up to the sigmoid colon. The long tube, called a colonoscope, is inserted in the back passage and manoeuvred around the left hand side of the bowel.

The colonoscope has an illumination channel which enables light to be directed onto the lining of your bowel, and relays pictures back to a television screen. This enables the endoscopist to have a clear view of the lining of the bowel.



Why do I need a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Your symptoms suggest that you may have a problem with the large bowel (the colon), which requires investigation. These problems include:

- Bleeding from the back passage
- Abdominal pain
- A change in your normal bowel habit
- Screening for bowel cancer
- Checks for a family history of bowel cancer
- Checks of inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease and colitis)

What are the benefits of having a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

If there is any abnormality in the left hand side of the bowel then it should be possible to see it during the procedure. The test is relatively quick (approximately 15 minutes). It does not require a general anaesthetic but sometimes a short acting sedative drug is offered while the procedure is being carried out. The endoscopist may take samples (biopsies) of tissue so they can be examined under a microscope. Any small polyps which are found can also be removed at the same time.

Polyps

A polyp is a lumpy growth from the lining of the bowel. Some polyps are on a stalk and some are flat. Polyps can usually be removed or sampled (biopsies taken) as they may grow and cause problems.

Polyps are usually removed by placing a snare (a wire loop) around the polyp. A high frequency current is then applied and the polyp removed. Smaller polyps are sometimes removed by forceps that cut the polyp off.

Is there an alternative to having a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

There are alternatives such as a CT scan which is an X-ray procedure. This may find areas which are abnormal but does not allow samples (biopsies) to be taken. You may have already had another investigation which did not pick up the problem or showed an abnormality which now requires a biopsy to be taken.

Are there any risks involved?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a skilled procedure performed by a trained endoscopist who takes every care to reduce any risks. However, as it involves inserting a camera into your bowel, by its nature it carries the risk of complications. Although these complications arise very rarely we need to make you aware of them.

Risks associated with the procedure:

- **Perforation or tear** of the lining in the bowel. This is a rare complication with an approximate incidence of 1 in every 2,500 procedures. It requires hospital admission for observation and sometimes surgery to repair the perforation. The risk of perforation is higher with polyp removal; approximate incidence is 1 in every 500 procedures.
- **Bleeding** at the site of polyp removal or biopsy. Bleeding is normally minor and usually stops on its own; however in the event this isn't the case, it can be controlled by cauterisation or injection treatment.

Risks associated with having sedation:

In a small number of patients sedation may cause problems with slower breathing, low blood pressure and a slow heart rate. Careful monitoring of these vital signs during the procedure by your nurse will detect any changes early and these can be treated rapidly.

Incomplete procedure

In a small number of patients the colonoscope cannot be manoeuvred all the way around the left side of the bowel you may then need another test such as a CT scan.

In addition it is possible to miss small abnormalities particularly if the laxative or enema used to empty the bowel has not worked well.

Will I need sedation?

Sedation is rarely required for this procedure, however, it can be given if required through an intravenous cannula (small plastic tube put into your vein). It is a sedative, not an anaesthetic, and will make most people feel drowsy and relaxed but they will usually not go to sleep during the test. Some patients may like to use Entonox (gas and air) as an inhaled pain killer.

How long will I have to be at the hospital?

You will usually have the flexible sigmoidoscopy as a day patient. Although the test itself only takes around 15 minutes, there is an admission and discharge process and often a waiting period as it is not possible to predict accurately how long each of the different procedures carried out in the endoscopy unit will take. You should be prepared to be in the unit for between 2-4 hours. The units close at 6pm.

Please note, appointment times are not exact, the unit has to respond to unexpected emergencies therefore occasional delays are inevitable.

Will I get the results straight away?

When you have recovered, a healthcare professional will explain the results and go through your report with you. Should you require a further endoscopic procedure, your appointment may be made before you leave the unit. You will also receive an aftercare information leaflet to take home.

Are there any after effects?

After effects are rare, but you may notice some bleeding if a biopsy has been taken or a polyp removed. You may experience wind /cramp like tummy pain. If you have had sedation you may have some drowsiness during the first 24 hours after the flexible sigmoidoscopy. (see paragraph: "After the examination")

You are advised to follow a light diet for 24 hours following the procedure.

Preparing for the examination

The bowel must be completely cleared of all waste matter. This is achieved by the use of a bowel cleansing medicine. The medicine is designed to give you diarrhoea so it is advisable to stay at home during this time as you will need to be near a toilet. You will not be able to go to work during bowel preparation.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT HOW TO TAKE THE BOWEL PREPARATION CAREFULLY

Note If you have a **colostomy** the medicine will work in the same way. You are advised to put on a drainable appliance before taking the medicine and keep it on until after the examination. If you do not have any drainable appliances (pouches), please contact your stoma care nurse.

Hospital based preparation

In special circumstances an enema may be a more suitable form of bowel cleansing. You will be advised of this when your appointment is being made.

Preparing for your flexible sigmoidoscopy

- Please bring a **dressings gown, slippers** etc.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown for the procedure.
- **Do not bring valuable items.**
- If you are **asthmatic**, please bring your inhalers with you and tell the nurse.
- If you have **diabetes**, please ensure the endoscopy unit is aware and your diabetes tablets and/or insulin are with you on the day. If you need advice, contact your Diabetes Nurse Specialist or your GP.

- If you have sleep apnoea and wish to have sedation for the test then please bring your usual breathing apparatus with you.
- If you are taking **iron tablets**, stop 7 days before the test.
- If you are taking **Warfarin** (or any other blood thinning tablets e.g. Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Apixaban) or **Clopidogrel** (or other “antiplatelet” drugs), please inform the Endoscopy booking clerk or pre admissions nurse when making your appointment.
- **Aspirin** should be continued.
- If you are taking any other regular medications, please continue these as normal and bring your list of medications with you.
- If you have a **heart valve replacement**, are **pregnant, trying to conceive or breastfeeding**, are in poor health or very frail, please telephone us.

Useful Links:

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust Website www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/gastro

Guts UK Charity for patient information <https://gutscharity.org.uk/>

If you would like a copy of this information sheet on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call 01296 315175 (SMH) or 01494 425288 (WH)

Legal Notice

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

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