

Patient information

L Clinic Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Surgical Speciality

You have been referred for a flexible sigmoidoscopy as a means of investigating your bowel.

What is a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

This is an examination of the lower bowel in which a flexible telescope is inserted into your back passage allowing inspection of the left colon (bowel). The scope has a lens (camera) on its end enabling the person performing the test (the endoscopist) to view the inside of your bowel on a television screen. The test will be carried out by a non-medical endoscopist, usually a qualified nurse or radiographer.

What are the benefits of having a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

It is the most accurate way of inspecting the lining of the large bowel (colon) to look for disease. It also allows small tissue samples (biopsies) to be taken that are then sent to the laboratory for assessment. Small polyps can also be removed during the procedure.

What are the risks of having a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Perforation

It is possible, although quite rare, to cause a hole in the bowel wall (perforation). If this does occur it can lead to peritonitis (severe inflammation inside the tummy) which usually requires an operation to repair it. The risk of this happening is relatively small but removing polyps does increase the risk.

Bleeding

The lining of the bowel is similar to the inside of the mouth and so bleeds easily when instruments come into contact with it (just like at the dentist). Minor bleeding may occur if biopsies are taken but this should stop within a short time.

If a polyp needs removing, by passing a small electric current through its base, then bleeding may be more serious but can usually be dealt with at the time. Rarely bleeding may occur a few days after the procedure.

Are there any alternatives to this procedure?

This is the best test to examine the lowest part of your bowel. We use alternative tests such as CT colonography for some patients but these are not always as useful as a direct examination of the bowel which has the advantage that samples can be taken at the same time.

What will happen if I decide not to have this investigation?

Doing nothing may result in your signs and symptoms getting worse over time. It may mean that you will not be getting the treatment you need

Will I require sedation?

Sedation is not offered for this particular service. You may experience some “wind” type discomfort but this will pass once the procedure is over.

Most people tolerate the test well but if you find it too uncomfortable all you need to do is ask the endoscopist to stop. It may be necessary for you to undergo a different test at a later date if the bowel has not been adequately seen.

Getting ready for the examination

- You will need to have a ‘clean’ bowel before the procedure. This is done by using a Phosphate enema (via the back passage) or by taking oral bowel preparation.
- If you are using the enema preparation you should eat and drink as normal before attending the clinic.
- The enema should be administered one hour before leaving for your clinic appointment.
- If you are unable to administer the enema this could delay the timing of your appointment and you will be in the clinic for longer than planned.
- **If however you chose to have oral bowel preparation then you must follow the instructions regarding taking no solid food for 36 hours.**
- Please bring any medicines you are taking with you to clinic.
- **If you are taking iron tablets, please stop them a week before your appointment.**
- Please complete and bring the past medical history form with you.
- You should expect to be in the clinic for at least an hour but possibly longer.

Your flexible sigmoidoscopy procedure

During the test you will be asked to lie on your left side on a couch with your knees bent.

A rectal examination will be performed with a gloved finger, which will help to relax the muscle.

After this, the telescope will be lubricated and inserted into your bottom. Small puffs of air are then blown down the telescope and into your bowel, so that it can be seen clearly.

The examination of the bowel takes about five to fifteen minutes or slightly longer if biopsies need to be taken. Once your examination is complete, you may wish to go to the toilet before getting dressed.

Results

The results of the flexible sigmoidoscopy will be given to you before you leave the clinic but further tests may be required.

If everything is normal, once all the tests are complete, we will send you a letter or telephone you informing you of your results.

Occasionally you may be invited back to the clinic to discuss further tests or treatment. Your family doctor (GP) will be informed of your test results by letter at the same time as you.

Cancellations

If you are unable to attend, please telephone the Colorectal Clerk so that your appointment can be given to someone else.

The Colorectal Clerk

Tel: 0151 706 3403 (answer phone)

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3403

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

If you have any questions or queries, regarding this procedure please contact:

The Gastroenterology Unit during the following hours

Monday – Thursday	0800 – 2100 hrs
Friday	0800 – 1700 hrs
Saturday/Sunday/BH	0800 – 1600 hrs

Tel: 0151 706 2819/2726

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2656/2720

Clinic appointment enquiries

Tel: 0151 706 5555

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 5555

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2050/2051

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