

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy: An Overview

- Please read the following information and enclosed prep instructions upon receipt. An early understanding of the requirements for a successful flexible sigmoidoscopy can help prevent the rescheduling and lengthy delay of your appointment.
- As with any procedure, flexible sigmoidoscopy can present slight risks. The information enclosed is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor, but is presented as a general overview of the procedure. If after reading the enclosed materials you believe you would benefit from meeting with your gastroenterologist prior to your procedure, please call us to schedule an office appointment. (Scheduling office time may require rescheduling and delaying the date of your procedure.)

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is a routine outpatient procedure in which the inner lining of the lower large intestine is examined. Flexible sigmoidoscopy is commonly used to evaluate gastrointestinal symptoms, such as abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, or changes in bowel habits. They are also preformed to screen people over age 50 for colon and rectal cancer. This procedure is most typically performed without sedation.

During the procedure, a doctor uses a sigmoidoscope, a long, flexible tubular instrument about ½ inch in diameter, to view the lining of the rectum and the lower third of the colon (the sigmoid colon). The sigmoidoscope is inserted through the rectum and advance through the large intestine. If necessary, small amounts of tissue can be removed for lab analysis (called a biopsy) and polyps can be identified and sometimes removed.

Bowel Preparation is necessary for a successful sigmoidoscopy. It is very important that you read and understand the enclosed instructions (“prep”) for your bowel preparation well in advance of the test.

Your doctor’s ability to see inside your sigmoid colon depends on how thoroughly it has been cleared of stool (feces). If you still have questions after reading the instructions, please call us to ensure a successful prep.

Risks: While the sigmoidoscopy is generally a safe and well tolerated procedure, there is a potential for complications. These are rare and include perforation (a tear in the bowel wall), bleeding, and missed diagnoses. Please call and discuss any concerns you might have with your doctor prior to your examination.