



Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Flexible sigmoidoscopy enables the physician to look at the inside of the large intestine from the rectum through the last part of the colon, called the sigmoid or descending colon. Physicians may use the procedure to find the cause of bleeding, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or constipation. They also use it to look for early signs of cancer in the descending colon and rectum. With flexible sigmoidoscopy, the physician can see bleeding, inflammation, abnormal growths, and ulcers in the descending colon and rectum. Flexible sigmoidoscopy is **not** sufficient to detect polyps or cancer in the ascending or transverse colon (upper two-thirds of the colon).

For the procedure, you will lie on your left side on the examining table. The physician may give you a mild intravenous sedative to help you relax during the procedure, or the test may be performed without any sedation if you so choose. The physician will insert a short, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum and slowly guide it into your colon. The tube is called a sigmoidoscope. The scope transmits an image of the inside of the rectum and colon, so the physician can carefully examine the lining of these organs. The scope also introduces air into the colon, which inflates it and helps the physician see better.

If anything unusual is in your rectum or colon, like a polyp or inflamed tissue, the physician can remove a piece of it using instruments inserted into the scope. The physician will send that piece of tissue (biopsy) to the lab for testing.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is associated with a very low risk of complications when performed by a physician specially trained and experienced in the procedure. Bleeding and puncture of the colon are possible complications of sigmoidoscopy. However, such complications are uncommon.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy takes 10 to 15 minutes. During the procedure, you might feel pressure and slight cramping in your lower abdomen. You will feel better afterward when the air leaves your colon. Following the procedure, your doctor will discuss the findings with you.

Preparation Instructions

The colon and rectum must be **completely empty** for flexible sigmoidoscopy to be thorough and safe. Please follow these instructions carefully **before your procedure**:

1. Purchase two (2) **Fleets Rectal Enemas** (available without a prescription). Read and carefully follow the instructions on the box.
2. On the day of your procedure, **you may not have anything to eat or drink for 6 hours** prior to your appointment time.
3. **Two (2) hours before** your procedure, **TAKE BOTH ENEMAS**. (Take one, hold as long as possible, expel. Take the second enema, hold as long as possible, expel.)
4. If you would like to have **sedation** for your procedure, you must **bring someone with you** to your appointment who can drive you home. You will not be able to drive after receiving intravenous sedation.