



Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure to look inside the lower part of your large bowel at the rectum and sigmoid colon.

To see inside the bowel, the nurse uses a flexible sigmoidoscope – a small flexible tube with a camera and light at the end.

About flexible sigmoidoscopy

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure to examine the lower part of the bowel. It is a way to check for colon cancer. Colon cancer can start as a polyp. Polyps are abnormal growths inside the colon. They may vary in size and shape. Most are not cancer but some can turn into cancer.

The nurse cannot tell if a polyp is cancer by looking at it so a sample (biopsy) of the polyp will be taken for testing to see if you may need another test, such as a colonoscopy.

Possible complications

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a safe procedure. Possible complications include:

- Perforation or injury of the bowel wall that may need surgery to fix it (about 1 in 10,000 chance).
- Bleeding due to a biopsy of a polyp.

No test is perfect, and some polyps or cancer may be missed.

Preparing for your procedure

For the best and safest possible exam, the sigmoid colon must be empty of stool.

Before the procedure you need to buy 2 Sodium Phosphate Enemas (Fleet enemas) or 2 Dulcolax Suppositories you can buy these at the drug store.

Day of your procedure

Morning appointment

Have clear fluids until 2 hours before the procedure. Do not have breakfast the morning of your exam.

Afternoon appointment

You may have a light breakfast and then clear fluids up until 2 hours before the start of the procedure.

Enemas or Suppositories

You will need to give yourself either 2 enemas **or** 2 suppositories on the day of your procedure, not both. Follow the instructions on the box.

- 1 or 2 hours before you come to the hospital give yourself 1 enema or suppository.
- Wait 10 to 15 minutes, and then give yourself the other.
- 1st enema at _____
- 2nd enema at _____

Medications

Take your usual medications on the day of the procedure.

Medications for Diabetes

- If you have diabetes, you may eat normally and then only clear fluids 2 hours before the procedure.
- Take your normal diabetic pills and insulin dose.
- Check your glucose as usual and bring the results with you to the hospital.

During your procedure

No sedation is given. The procedure takes about 5 to 20 minutes.

You will be lying in a comfortable position on your left side. The flexible tube is inserted into the rectum and advanced along the sigmoid colon for about 60 cm. There can be a feeling of pressure or cramping.

The nurse will tell you what is being done and carefully examine the lining of the lower bowel. Samples are taken of tissues if needed.

There will be another nurse in the room monitoring your vitals signs (heart rate, breathing and blood pressure).

After the procedure

You will be given instructions on what to expect after your procedure and what type of follow-up is needed. Your follow-up depends on the results that the nurse finds the day of your procedure.

You may have minor discomfort such as a bloating or cramping, but these symptoms should go away within 24 hours.

Going home

You are welcome to bring someone with you to your appointment, but it is not necessary. You will not be sedated. It is safe to drive home after the procedure.

Clear fluids

Clear fluids are fluids that you can see through.

Clear fluids include:

- water
- juice with no pulp
- pop
- sports drinks
- popsicles
- jello
- tea or coffee (with no milk, cream or soy)
- chicken broth or consommé soup
- Ovaltine mixed with water

Note:

Nurse performed flexible sigmoidoscopy is a program used in Ontario to detect colon polyps and colon cancer. The procedure is for men and women, aged 50 to 74, who have had a negative Fecal Occult Blood Test (poop test) in the last 2 years.

This procedure increases the chance of finding polyps.

Where to go for your flexible sigmoidoscopy

Date _____.

Come to the hospital at _____.

Plan to be at the hospital for about 1 to 2 hours. The time varies, please check with the nurse.

McMaster University Medical Centre

Park in the yellow section in the underground parking lot. Take the yellow elevators to the 4th floor. Turn left and follow the hallway to the 4X area on the left.

Follow the signs to Endoscopy, and check in at the reception desk.

If you have questions, please call Tracey Corner, RN, Program Nurse, 905-521-2100, ext. 76933.

If you need to change your appointment, call the booking desk at 905-521-2100, ext. 75352.

For more information on nurse performed flexible sigmoidoscopy
<https://www.cancercare.on.ca/pcs/screening/coloscreening/rnfs/>