



A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure which involves using a long, flexible tube to look inside the rectum and part of the large colon called the sigmoid.

About flexible sigmoidoscopy

This procedure is a way to check for colon cancer and to remove polyps in the left side of the colon. Polyps are abnormal growths inside the colon. They vary in size and shape. Most are not cancer but some can turn into cancer. You cannot tell if a polyp is cancer by looking at it.

Sigmoidoscopy can also be helpful to figure out various problems such as blood loss, rectal pain or changes in bowel habits.

Tiny instruments can be passed through the tube and used to take samples within the colon, treat bleeding or do other treatments.

Possible complications

Sigmoidoscopy is a safe procedure. Possible complications include:

- Perforation or injury of the bowel wall that may need surgery to fix
- Heart and breathing problems
- Bleeding

Sigmoidoscopy is not perfect, and some abnormalities such as polyps or cancer may be missed.

Preparing for your procedure

Before the procedure you need to buy 2 Sodium Phosphate Enemas (Fleet enemas). You can buy these at the drug store. Ask the pharmacist how to give yourself an enema.

The evening before your procedure

- **If you are not having sedation:** eat your regular supper, then you can have only clear fluids until after the procedure.
- **If you are having sedation:** you can drink clear fluids up to 4 hours before the procedure. Then, make sure to have nothing by mouth at least 4 hours before the procedure.

Day of your procedure

- 2 hours before you come to the hospital give yourself 1 enema.
- Wait 10 to 15 minutes, then give yourself the other enema.

Medications

Take your usual medications on the day of the procedure with sips of water. Your doctor may not want you to take blood thinners or diabetes medications, and will discuss this with you.

During your procedure

Normally, no sedation is given. The procedure usually takes less than 20 minutes. However, an intravenous line (IV) can be placed to give medication to make you drowsy and more comfortable. You will be awake and cooperative.

A nurse will be in the room and your blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen will be watched.

When the tube is in place, air is put through it. You may feel some cramping or fullness but generally there is no discomfort.

The doctor will look for any problems that may need follow-up or treatment.

After the procedure

Most patients go home right after the procedure, if you had sedation, you will stay in the recovery area until you are awake and ready to go home. You will be given instructions on how to care for yourself when you get home.

Rest for the remainder of the day. You may have minor problems such as a bloating or cramping, but should go away within 24 hours.

Going home

Plan to be at the hospital for about 1 to 3 hours.

To go home safely after sedation, an adult must pick you up in the Endoscopy Room and take you home.

For 24 hours after your procedure you cannot:

- drive a vehicle
- ride on a motorcycle
- operate machinery
- drink any alcohol

Patient Education

Patient Education videos are available from the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology.

www.cag-acg.org/posters-related-tools/110

For more information about digestive health and tests:

www.gastro.org/patient-center

Clear fluids includes any fluid that you can see through that is not red or purple. Some examples include water, juice, pop, sports drinks, popsicles, jello, tea or coffee (with no milk).

Special instructions

Where to go for your procedure

Date _____.

Come to the hospital at _____.

Hamilton General Hospital

Check in at Patient Registration on the Main Level.

Then go to Endoscopy on the Main Level.

Phone 905-521-2100, ext. 44932

Juravinski Hospital

Check in at Patient Registration on the main floor.

Then go to Section B, Level 3, Endoscopy Department.

Phone 905-521-2100, ext. 42334

McMaster University Medical Centre

Check in at Patient Registration on the main floor. Then 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.

Phone 905-521-2100, ext. 76924

Bring to the hospital

- Bring a list of your medications and allergies with you.
- If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar as usual. Bring the results to the hospital.

If you have questions or need to change your appointment, call the hospital where you are having your procedure.