



P R O C E D U R E I N F O S H E E T

## FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is the visual examination of the inside of the rectum and sigmoid colon. During this procedure, only the end of the colon, typically the last one or two feet, is examined.

The procedure is performed using an endoscope, which is a thin, flexible tube equipped with a tiny camera that allows the physician to view any affected regions of your gastrointestinal tract and make a much more accurate diagnosis.

### **WHY DO I NEED A FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY?**

A flexible sigmoidoscopy may be performed to diagnose the cause of gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea, bleeding, abdominal pain, or abnormal X-ray results. Starting at age 50, a flexible sigmoidoscopy may also be performed on a patient without any symptoms to screen for colon cancer and polyps.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE MY FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY PROCEDURE?**

You will be given specific instructions to prepare for your flexible sigmoidoscopy.

These instructions will include a special diet the day before the procedure and specifics regarding medication. A clear liquid diet is usually the designated diet before a colonoscopy. Laxatives or an enema may also be necessary before the procedure to clean the bowel.

### **WHAT HAPPENS DURING A FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY?**

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is well tolerated and rarely causes much discomfort. The procedure usually takes about 5 to 10 minutes. Your

physician will ask you to lie on your left side while the scope is advanced slowly through the lower portion of the colon. You may feel slight discomfort, similar to bloating or having gas, but this will soon subside. The scope is then slowly withdrawn and the lining of the intestine is examined. If the scope shows something abnormal the physician may take a biopsy. Remember that biopsies are taken for many reasons and do not necessarily mean cancer is expected.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY?**

You may experience bloating or bowel distensions following the procedure, but these usually last no longer than 60 minutes. Your physician will then explain the results of the exam.

### **ARE THERE ANY RISKS OF A FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY?**

Serious side effects from this procedure are uncommon, but some may include tears in the wall of the colon, which would require surgery, or bleeding if a large polyp is removed. Your physician will address any concerns you may have prior to the procedure.



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