

Information about...

FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY

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What is flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy allows inspection of the lining of the rectum, anus and lower part of the colon. It uses a flexible tube with a "video camera" at the tip. The instrument is about 1cm thick.

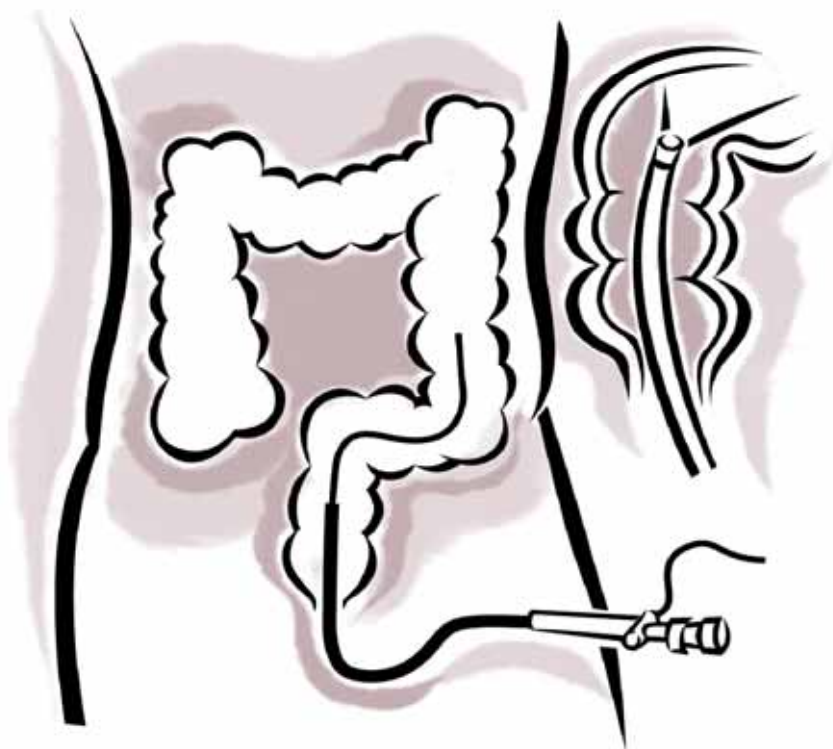
What preparation is required?

Your doctor will tell you what preparation is required. Usually there is no need to fast prior to the procedure and a small enema is the only preparation, given just before the procedure. Occasionally your doctor may decide not to use any preparation. If you are receiving sedation for the procedure you will need to have an empty stomach. This will require fasting for 6 hours prior to the procedure. It is unusual to require a full colonic preparation prior to this procedure.



Should I continue my current medications?

Most medications can be continued as usual. Inform your doctor about medications that you're taking - particularly blood thinning medications such as warfarin, aspirin, Plavix or Iscover.



What can I expect during flexible sigmoidoscopy?

You will lie on your side while your doctor advances the sigmoidoscope through the rectum and colon. You might experience a feeling of pressure, bloating or cramping during the procedure.

What if the flexible sigmoidoscopy finds something abnormal?

If your doctor sees an area that needs further evaluation, your doctor might take a biopsy (sample of the colon lining) to be analysed. Biopsies are used to identify many conditions, and your doctor might order one even if he or she doesn't suspect cancer.

If your doctor finds polyps, he/she might take a biopsy of them as well. Polyps, which are growths from the lining of the colon, vary in size and types. If your doctor sees polyps, he/she might organise a **colonoscopy** in order to examine the entire colon.

What happens after a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

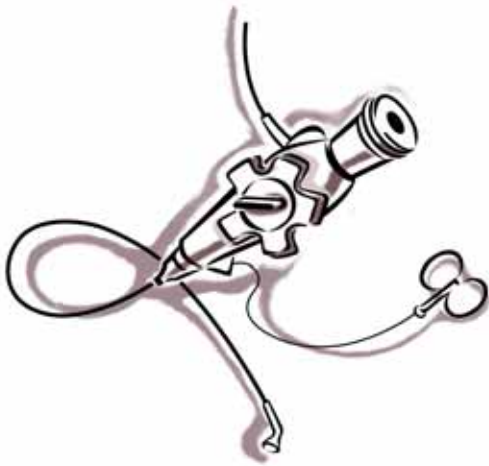
Your doctor will explain the results to you when the procedure is done. You might feel bloating or some mild cramping because of the air that was passed into the colon during the examination. This will disappear quickly when you pass gas. If you did not receive sedation you will be able to drive afterwards.

What are possible complications of flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy and biopsy are very safe when performed by doctors who are specially trained and experienced in these endoscopic procedures. Complications are rare, but it's important for you to recognise early signs of possible complications.

Contact your doctor if you notice severe abdominal pain, fevers and chills, or rectal bleeding.

If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure or don't fully understand the contents of this document, you should discuss this with your doctor prior to undergoing the procedure.



This information booklet has been designed by the Digestive Health Foundation as an aid to people who will undergo a flexible sigmoidoscopy or for those who wish to know more about it. This is not meant to replace personal advice from your medical practitioner.

The Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) is an educational body committed to promoting better health for all Australians by promoting education and community health programs related to the digestive system.

The DHF is the educational arm of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia, the professional body representing the Specialty of gastrointestinal and liver disease in Australia. Members of the Society are drawn from physicians, surgeons, scientists and other medical specialties with an interest in GI disorders.

Since its establishment in 1990 the DHF has been involved in the development of programs to improve community awareness and the understanding of digestive diseases.

Research and education into gastrointestinal disease are essential to contain the effects of these disorders on all Australians.

Further information on a wide variety of gastrointestinal conditions is available on our website.