

## Flexible Sigmoidoscopy: Patient Information

### **What is Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

This procedure involves a colonoscope (a thin flexible tube with a camera at the tip) being passed through the anus into the large intestine (colon) but only to the left side of colon. It allows the doctor to inspect the large intestine for any abnormalities and also perform specialised procedures such as biopsies and removal of polyps.

### **Why should I have a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is useful both for the diagnosis and treatment of different bowel conditions. It is usually performed to assess disease activity of colitis, investigate rectal bleeding. In most cases patients already had a colonoscopy in the past.

### **How do I prepare for a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

Your doctor will tell you what preparation is needed. If you are not having a sedative for the procedure, you don't need to fast beforehand. If your doctor plans to give you sedation for the procedure, you will need to have an empty stomach. This will require fasting (having no food or drinks) for 6 hours before the procedure.

Usually, a small enema (a solution that is inserted into the rectum to clean the lower bowel) is the only preparation, and it is given just before the procedure. Sometimes your doctor may decide not to use any preparation at all. It is unusual to require a full bowel clean-out.

### **How is Flexible Sigmoidoscopy performed?**

You will lie on your side while your doctor moves the endoscope through the rectum and colon. Before the procedure a light anaesthetic is given. You will not receive a full general anaesthetic. You may be slightly aware of what is going on in the room, but generally you won't remember anything. A highly qualified anaesthetist and nursing staff will monitor your vital signs during the procedure and will attempt to make you as comfortable as possible.

### **What happens after Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

Following the procedure you will remain in the recovery area for an hour or two until the sedation medication wears off. You will usually be given something light to eat and drink once you are awake. When you wake up you may feel a little bloated. This is due to the air that was inserted during the procedure, and will pass over the next hour or so.

Your doctor will briefly inform you of your test results on the day of the procedure. A follow-up appointment may be made to discuss the test results more fully. The results of any biopsies or samples taken will take a few days.

### **What are the risks of Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

Flexible sigmoidoscopy and biopsy are very safe when performed by doctors who are trained and experienced in these procedures. Complications are very uncommon. These include problems such as bleeding from the place where a biopsy was taken or a polyp was removed and damage to the wall of the bowel (a perforation). These are rare, but it is important for you to recognise early signs of possible complications. Contact your doctor or the hospital if you notice severe abdominal pain, fevers and chills or rectal bleeding.