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Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is the visual examination of the lining of the lower intestine (sigmoid colon) and rectum. The lower intestine is 5-6 feet long. In the procedure, only the latter part (1-2 feet) of the lower intestine is examined. The purpose of the exam is to identify any abnormalities by inserting a flexible fiberoptic tube into the anus. The tube, which is about the thickness of your finger, is slowly passed into the rectum and sigmoid colon.

The results obtained from the sigmoidoscopy may help to explain the cause of such symptoms as rectal bleeding, pain, or diarrhea.

What are the benefits of flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is an effective tool to prevent and detect early colon cancer. Colon cancer is the second most common cause of death from cancer in the United States. Many lives can be saved if precancerous growths (polyps) are discovered before they become cancerous, or if colon cancer is discovered before it has spread. Sigmoidoscopy can diagnose inflammation of the colon from conditions such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. Other colon

conditions such as diverticulosis also can be diagnosed.

Who should have the procedure?

People who have problems such as persistent abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, persistent diarrhea or anemia (low blood counts) may need flexible sigmoidoscopy. Everyone (even those without these complaints) older than 50 years should undergo the exam every 3 to 5 years to screen for colon diseases.

How do I prepare for the test?

Your colon and rectum must be thoroughly clean in order. Eat a clear liquid diet the afternoon and evening of the day before the scheduled sigmoidoscopy. Take two Fleet enemas (available over the counter at your pharmacy) just before the exam.

What happens during the exam?

While lying on your left side with your knees bent, your physician will perform a finger exam of the anus and rectum. The sigmoidoscope will be inserted, and your physician will be able to visualize the bowel wall.

Air is placed in the colon to allow for viewing, and the air can produce cramping. You may also feel lower abdominal pressure as the instrument is moved through the bowel. Most people tolerate the exam well and prefer not to be sedated so that they can resume normal activities immediately afterward. People who are sedated have a slightly increased risk of colon perforation (a hole created in the

wall of the colon). The short exam time (usually 5 to 20 minutes) helps make this a tolerable procedure.

Are biopsies performed during the sigmoidoscopy?

Most procedures do not require biopsies, but occasionally a biopsy of a growth is needed. The biopsy specimen is obtained by clipping a small piece of tissue inside the colon and removing it through the viewing tube. If a biopsy is performed, you have some minimal discomfort or slight bleeding from the rectum for several days.

What can I expect after the exam?

You can expect to feel bloating for about 30 to 60 minutes afterwards. This sensation will be relieved as gas is passed.

Your doctor will discuss the findings of the exam and provide you with instructions to follow when you return home. Ask your physician if you have any questions.

Are there possible complications? Flexible sigmoidoscopy is safe and is associated with very low risk. Complications that could occur but are very rare are: perforation of the colon (rupture) and bleeding if a biopsy is taken.

General Instructions:

- 1.** Arrive promptly for your appointment. Late arrival may necessitate cancellation of your appointment.
- 2.** Bring your insurance card or Medicaid card with you. If you do not have insurance or other financial coverage, you will need to pay for the procedure on the day of service, or see the patient accounts specialist prior to the appointment to set up payment arrangements.
- 3.** If you cannot keep your appointment, please give no later than 24 hours notice to our office for the cancellation as this type of appointment is allotted extra time for the physician. Failure to do so will result in a cancellation or no call no show fee.
- 4.** If there are any questions regarding anything in this text, please contact our office at 330-682-3075.