



## ➤ FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY

### What is Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy (SIG-moy-DAH-skuh-pee) allows the physician to look at the inside of the lower portion of the large intestine, the rectum, sigmoid and often the descending colon. The doctor inserts a flexible tube about the thickness of your finger through the anus and slowly advances it into the rectum and lower part of the colon. Physicians may use the procedure to find the cause of diarrhea, abdominal pain, or constipation. They also use it to look for early signs of cancer. Flexible sigmoidoscopy allows the doctor to see bleeding, inflammation, abnormal growths, and ulcers.

### What Can I Expect During Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is usually well tolerated and takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to perform. You will lie on a procedure table on your left side. The physician will insert a short, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum and slowly guide it into your colon. The scope transmits an image of the inside of the rectum and colon, so the physician can carefully examine the lining of these organs. The scope also blows air into these organs, which inflates them and improves the doctor's view. You may feel pressure, bloating or cramping during the procedure.

If anything unusual is in your rectum or colon, like a polyp or inflamed tissue, the doctor can remove a piece of it using instruments inserted into the scope. The physician will send that piece of tissue (called a biopsy) to the pathology laboratory for testing.

### What Preparation is Required for the Procedure?

The colon and rectum must be completely empty for flexible sigmoidoscopy to be thorough and safe. So, your doctor may request you to drink only clear liquids for 12 to 24 hours beforehand. The night before or right before the procedure, you may also be given an enema, which is a liquid solution that washes out the intestines. Your doctor will tell you exactly what cleansing routine to use. Regardless, it is important to follow your physician's instructions carefully.

\*Content derived from the National Digestive Disease Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC) & the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

Provided as a courtesy by

**GI PATHOLOGY**  
One Purpose. One Passion.

A DIVISION OF  
**POPLAR**  
HEALTHCARE

### What if Flexible Sigmoidoscopy Finds an Abnormality?

If your doctor finds an area that needs further evaluation, your physician may take a biopsy to be analyzed by an expert gastrointestinal pathologist. Biopsies are used to identify many conditions, and your doctor may take one even if he or she doesn't suspect cancer.

### What Happens After Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Your physician will explain the results of the procedure once it is completed. You may feel bloated or mild cramping because of the air that was introduced into the colon during the examination. This should disappear rather quickly as you pass gas. You should be able to eat and resume your normal activities after the procedure.

### What are Possible Complications of Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Complications are rare, but it is important for you to recognize any early signs. Bleeding and puncture of the colon are two such concerns. Contact your physician if you notice severe abdominal pain, fever and chills, or significant rectal bleeding. Note that rectal bleeding can occur several days after a biopsy and is a normal occurrence. However, you should monitor rectal bleeding closely and contact your physician's office if you have any concerns.

Important Information: The information included on this sheet is intended only to provide general guidance and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any instance. It is extremely important that you consult a physician about your specific condition.

