



Dorset HealthCare
University
NHS Foundation Trust

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Information for patients,
relatives and carers

A blue heart-shaped logo containing the text 'Excellence', 'Compassion', and 'Expertise' stacked vertically. 'Excellence' is in yellow, 'Compassion' is in white, and 'Expertise' is in orange.

Excellence
Compassion
Expertise

Introduction

You have been advised by your GP or hospital doctor to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy examination. **We will need to have your formal consent before we can carry out this examination.**

This booklet explains how the examination is carried out, and what the risks are. This will help you to make an informed decision when agreeing to the examination. The consent form is included with your admission paperwork. Please read it carefully.

What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a test which allows the doctor to look directly at the lining of the left hand side of the large bowel (colon).

In order to do this test, a scope is passed through the anus (back passage). The scope is a long flexible tube about the thickness of your index finger with a bright light on the end.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a short test and most people do not need to have sedation. If you are particularly anxious about the test please call the Day Surgery Unit and speak to one of the nurses.

The doctor can check whether or not any abnormalities are present by looking at the image on a TV screen. If necessary the doctor will take a biopsy (a sample of tissue) using tiny forceps, this is a painless procedure.

If your problems are due to haemorrhoids (piles) these may be treated whilst you are here. Any polyps which are present may be removed, to help prevent any potential problems later.

To allow a clear view, the lower part of the bowel must be clear of waste material. You will be sent tablets to take and an enema to use. Full instructions will be given in an accompanying letter.

Why do I need a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

You have been advised to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy to help find the cause of your symptoms.

The results will help us to decide on the best treatment for your problem, and whether we need to carry out any further examinations. The reasons for this examination include:

- Bleeding from the back passage
- Abdominal pain and diagnosing the extent of some inflammatory bowel disease
- Follow-up inspection of previous disease
- Assessing the clinical importance of abnormalities found on X-ray.

On the day

There may be a short wait on the Day Surgery Unit before you have your procedure. This is to allow adequate time for preparation and safety checks, ensuring that our standards are met for each patient. We suggest you allow up to 2 hours from time of admission to time of discharge and that you may wish to bring something to read to help pass the time. Please note there is limited waiting in the Day Surgery Unit for relatives.

On admission the nurse and doctor will be available to talk to and answer any questions you may have. In the procedure room you will be made comfortable, lying on your left side with your knees slightly bent. When the scope is gently inserted into your back passage, your colon will be dilated with air to give a clear view. This may cause some discomfort, wind-like pains, but it soon passes. The examination lasts about 15 minutes. We do have Entonox (gas and air) available, if required for pain relief; however you will need to stay 30 minutes after the procedure to recover.

What about my medicines?

You should continue to take your routine medicines **with the following exceptions:**

- If you are taking iron tablets, you must stop these one week before your appointment
- Anticoagulants: Theatre staff will advise if & when these need to be stopped.

After the procedure

In most cases the doctor or nurse will be able to tell you the results of the examination straight away. The doctor may write to you or give you a follow-up appointment. Your GP will receive a copy of the biopsy results, usually 2 weeks after the procedure.

Alternatives

CT scans (a CT virtual colonoscopy) are alternative ways of looking at your large bowel. The main drawback of these tests, is that they only provide pictures of the shape of your bowel, and do not allow samples to be taken or for polyps to be removed. They will also expose you to high levels of radiation. You would require a similar bowel preparation to these tests as well.

Your doctor will have considered a CT virtual colonoscopy for you before asking you to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy. If you do have questions about these alternatives, please mention them to your doctor.

What are the risks?

Risks or complications are rare:

- You may experience cramping because of the air introduced during the procedure.
- Bleeding and puncture of the colon are possible, but happen very rarely. If you experience any problems you can contact your GP.
- Risk of a missed lesion: there is a small risk that we might miss a polyp or other important finding during your test.
- Bleeding can occur if we take a sample (biopsy) or have removed a polyp. This happens to about 1 in 150 people; but this is usually minor and stops on its own.

You will be offered a hot drink and biscuit before leaving the Department, and you may resume a normal diet immediately.

Further advice

If you would like any further information or if you experience any problems within the first 24 hours after your appointment please contact:

Day surgery unit Swanage Hospital 01929 475008

Admissions office 9–4 pm 01929 475047

Minor injuries 8- 8 pm 01929 475009

You could also contact your GP

Dorset Out of Hours Medical Service on 111

Poole Hospital A+E 01202 442202 (out of Hours)

Emergency 999

Useful websites

www.patient.co.uk—information on tests and procedures

How to find Swanage Hospital

By road: The Sandbanks to Studland chain ferry can be used if you are coming from the Bournemouth and Poole area. On-road parking is available outside the hospital on Queens Road.

By bus: The Bus Depot in the centre of Swanage is the nearest stop, approximately a 10 minute uphill walk to the hospital. A taxi rank is also located at the Bus Depot.

By rail: Wareham station is the nearest mainline service.

The information in this leaflet is available in additional languages and alternative formats. Please contact the Trust for further details.

© Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner.

Leaflet ref: D-P-CH7-19

Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust

Sentinel House
4–6 Nuffield Road
Poole, Dorset
BH17 0RB
☎ 01202 277000

🐦 @DorsetHealth

🌐 www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk