



A guide to...

Having a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy and Argon Plasma Coagulation Therapy

Patient Information

How to contact us

Booking and interpreting queries – Please call the number on your appointment letter

Clinical queries – Hemel Hempstead 01442 287968 / Watford 01923 436095

Any other query – Please call Hemel Hempstead 01442 287681 / Watford 01923 217530

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01923 217187 or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



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If you are taking blood thinning medications such as warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabigatran, rivaroxaban or apixaban, please call the department on the number on your appointment letter to notify us.

What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is an investigation that allows us to look directly at part of your colon. A flexible tube is passed up your bottom and around the lower part of your colon. Through this tube we will be able to look for any abnormalities that may be present. If necessary, small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken during examination for laboratory analysis.

What is APC?

APC stands for Argon Plasma Coagulation. This is a heat treatment, which stops small blood vessels on the surface of the bowel wall from bleeding.

Preparation

To allow a clear view, the bowel must be completely free of waste material. You will need to take a laxative solution to drink the day before your examination or have an enema on the day of your test. It is important that you follow the instructions on the bowel preparation leaflet when you take this solution.

If you are taking iron tablets, stop these 5 days before your appointment. If you are taking blood thinning tablets (warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabigatran, rivaroxaban or apixaban) please contact the department on the number on your appointment letter immediately. If you are taking diabetic medication a leaflet is available from the unit, on request, or you can contact your GP or nurse specialist for advice. Take all other medication as you would usually. Please make sure you bring with you a list of all medications you are currently taking.

It is recommended that you do not travel abroad within two weeks of your procedure for safety reasons. This could invalidate your travel insurance. Please call us if you would like to discuss.

Having Sedation

Two kinds of sedation are available:

1. Conscious sedation can be given to you through a small needle placed in the back of your hand. This will make you feel relaxed but not asleep. With this type of sedation, it will be necessary for you to have a sleep in the unit afterwards. It is also essential that you arrange for a responsible person to escort you home after the test. Failure to make these arrangements may result in the investigation being cancelled. Because of the lingering effects of the drugs used it is important that, for the next 24 hours, you have someone to stay with you, you do not drive, return to work, operate machinery, sign any legal documents, or drink alcohol. Please note conscious sedation is not a general anaesthetic.
2. The second option is called Entonox, commonly known as Gas and Air. This works well as an effective pain relief. If you chose to have Entonox, you will be asked to rest on the unit for half an hour after which time you are safe to drive.

What will happen?

When you arrive the doctor or nurse will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign the consent form, giving us your permission to have the procedure performed. The nurse will ask you some safety questions. You will then be asked to position yourself on your left-hand side. The Endoscopist will check your back passage with a gloved finger and then the Endoscope will be inserted. Throughout the procedure you may experience some abdominal cramping which is quite normal and intermittent. You may also get the sensation of wanting to go to the toilet but as your bowel is already empty, there is little risk of this happening. During the procedure, you may be asked to change your position (i.e. lay on your back).

Afterwards

After the procedure you are encouraged to rest for a short while before going home. For some time afterwards your tummy may feel bloated. The air that was introduced into the bowel during the procedure causes this. The discomfort should settle in a few hours, but you may find walking around, massaging your tummy and passing wind helps.

When will I get the results of the procedure?

You will be given a copy of the report before you leave the department and the doctor or nurse will talk to you at the end of the procedure to explain their findings. If you have had samples sent to the laboratory the results will be reviewed by the endoscopist and you will be contacted within two weeks if there is anything of concern.

Are there any risks?

Rarely a small hole in the colon wall can develop (perforation) may occur. If no polyps are removed, then the risk of a complication is one in every 5000 cases. When polyps are removed the chance of these complications increases with the size of the polyp so a bleed may occur once in every 150 cases or a perforation once in every 500 cases. With endoscopic mucosal resection (large polyp removal) a bleed might occur in 1 in 20 patients and a perforation in 1 in 150. If a complication does occur, observation in hospital is necessary and surgery may be needed. It is also possible for bleeding to occur for up to two weeks after the procedure. Although a flexible sigmoidoscopy is a very sensitive test, no procedure is 100% accurate and there is a small chance that abnormalities can be missed. If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your doctor or a member of the team before you are due to have this procedure.

Are there any alternatives?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy and APC is recommended as the best way to treat your condition, and this should have been discussed with you before receiving your appointment.

What happens if I decide not to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy and APC?

Your doctor may not be able to treat the cause of your problem. If you decide not to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy and APC you should discuss this carefully with your doctor.

If you experience significant bleeding, severe abdominal pain or a change in vision after your procedure please call 01442 287968 / 01923 436095 during working hours. If the bleeding, pain or visual problems are severe do not delay. Please attend Watford General Hospital, Accident and Emergency Department and take a copy of your Endoscopy report with you. Do not drive. Call an ambulance if necessary.