



A guide to...

Having a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy with Oral Bowel Preparation

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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What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is an investigation that allows us to look directly at the lower part of your bowel. A flexible tube is passed into your back passage to inspect the lower part of your bowel. If necessary, small tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken during the examination for laboratory analysis. Polyps, which are abnormal growths of tissue from the lining of the bowel wall, can also be removed. The risks and benefits are explained on your consent form (enclosed with the appointment letter).

Preparation

To allow a clear view the colon must be completely free of waste material. You will have been sent a laxative solution to drink the day before your examination. 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 five days before your appointment. If you are taking blood thinning tablets (warfarin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor, dabigatran, rivaroxaban or apixaban) please call us on the number on your appointment letter to notify us. Please take all other medication as you usually would. Please also 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.

This test can be done with or without you having sedation. It is for you to choose which you have. Please let us know when you arrive which you would prefer.

Keeping you comfortable

Two kinds of sedation are available:

1. The first option is called Entonox, commonly known as Gas and Air. This is an anaesthetic gas that works well as an effective pain relief. If you chose to have Entonox, you will be asked to rest in the unit for a short time after which time you are safe to drive.
2. Intravenous conscious sedation can be given to you through a small IV line placed in your arm or hand. This will make you feel relaxed but not asleep. With this type of sedation, it will be necessary for you to rest in the unit afterwards. It is also essential that you arrange for a responsible person to escort you home after the test and stay with you for 24 hours. **Failure to make these arrangements may result in the investigation being cancelled.** Please note conscious sedation is not a general anaesthetic.

What will happen?

When you arrive the nurse will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign a consent form, giving us your permission to proceed with the test. You will be asked to change into a gown and dignity shorts will be provided. You may need to have a cannula inserted into your arm to give medications.

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. You will be offered a hot drink and may get dressed as soon as you feel ready. For some time afterwards your tummy may feel bloated. This is caused by the carbon dioxide that was introduced into the bowel during the procedure. The discomfort should settle in a few hours, but you may find walking around, massaging your tummy and passing wind helps. You may also find that you experience a small amount of bleeding from your back passage when you first have your bowels open following the investigation. This is quite normal and should soon settle.

Are there any risks?

Rarely a small hole in the colon wall can develop (perforation) or bleeding 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, this may occur five times in every 100 cases. 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.

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

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

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

Please do not hesitate to telephone the department on the telephone numbers above for Hemel Hempstead Hospital or for Watford General Hospital (Monday to Friday - 8.00am–6.00pm).

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.