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# FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY

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Your sigmoidoscopy is scheduled at (location)

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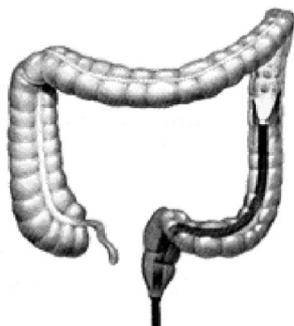
at (time) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Your doctor has recommended that you undergo a special examination of your colon called Flexible Sigmoidoscopy, commonly called a "flex sig". Since your cooperation is essential for a successful and complete examination, it is important that you know exactly what is to be done and why. If, after reading this pamphlet, you have any additional questions concerning this procedure, ask your doctor.

## **What is Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

Sigmoidoscopy is the examination of the lower third of the colon using a narrow flexible instrument. The physician can directly view the inside of the colon through the scope. This examination is very common. It is recommended by the American Cancer Society at the age of 50.



## **Why Do I Need This Test?**

The most common reason for doing flexible sigmoidoscopy is to help prevent colon cancer. It is now known that most colon cancers begin many years before as a small noncancerous growth called a polyp. But unfortunately, polyps usually cause no symptoms until they develop into colon cancer. To minimize your personal risk of colon cancer, your colon must be periodically examined just as one has periodic mammograms and prostate checkups. If a polyp is found during this exam and later removed, a potential colon cancer can be prevented. In other circumstances, flexible sigmoidoscopy can also be done to examine the left colon for signs of colitis, or to further evaluate symptoms such as diarrhea and rectal bleeding.

## **Is this Test Dangerous?**

There is some risk to any medical procedure, but the frequency of serious complications during flexible sigmoidoscopy is quite low. When performed by an experienced physician, the benefits far exceed the risks. The principal risks are perforation of the colon (a tear through the bowel wall) or bleeding. A perforation usually requires surgery but may be managed with antibiotics and intravenous fluids in selected cases. Bleeding from flexible sigmoidoscopy is usually minor and stops on its own or can be controlled with treatment. Occasionally, blood transfusions and surgery are necessary. Fortunately, both of these problems are quite rare during flexible sigmoidoscopy.

## **Preparation for Sigmoidoscopy**

Your colon must be empty during flexible sigmoidoscopy so that your doctor's view is not blocked by particles of stool. There is not a preparation for you to take at home. You will receive a fleets enema preparation when you arrive at the clinic. There is no fasting required. We prefer that you do eat the day of the exam. Unless otherwise instructed, you may take all of your routine medications as usual, even the day of the exam. You do not need a driver. Tell your doctor if you require antibiotics prior to dental procedures, because you might need antibiotics prior to sigmoidoscopy as well. Also, if you are allergic to any medications.

On the day of examination, wear comfortable clothing that is simple to remove. Prior to the test, you will be asked to remove your clothing and to slip into a patient gown, a consent form will be signed and the prep will be given to you. After you have expelled the enema you will be positioned comfortably on your left side on the padded examination table. The doctor may then do a rectal exam with a gloved, lubricated finger; then the

lubricated scope will be gently inserted. After the scope is positioned, the doctor will gently guide the flexible scope into the colon and examine the lining. To improve his view, your doctor will gently infuse air into the colon. This may cause a temporary sensation of abdominal fullness, cramping, or "gas," but the entire procedure should take less than ten minutes.

After the exam, the doctor will explain to you exactly what was found and if any further tests or treatment will be necessary. You will be able to resume your normal activities. Eat lightly at first, and then advance your diet as tolerated. Since air was placed in the colon during the exam, you may feel a little bloated and crampy until the extra air is expelled.