



# Flexible sigmoidoscopy

This booklet contains details about your appointment, information about the examination and preparation.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk)

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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**PLEASE READ THIS LEAFLET CAREFULLY, AS  
FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS  
MAY RESULT IN YOUR PROCEDURE BEING  
CANCELLED ON THE DAY.**

## Checklist

- Note appointment date and time
- Read all procedure information
- Stop iron tablets 7 days before procedure
- Telephone the booking number straightaway
  - If taking anticoagulation (blood thinners) as you will need to be advised by a health professional before your procedure.
  - If you have a pacemaker.
  - If tablet controlled diabetic.
- Contact your diabetic nurse if taking insulin.
- bring this booklet, consent form and completed health questionnaire with you to your appointment.

## Your appointment

Please write in your appointment date and time here

Date:

Time:

Salisbury District Hospital, Endoscopy booking office telephone **01722 429385**  
(9am – 4.30pm Monday – Friday)

If we are unable to answer your call please leave a message and we will call you back.

- Please telephone the above number if, due to unexpected circumstances, you are unable to keep your appointment. This will enable staff to arrange another date and time for you and give your appointment to someone else.
- Your procedure may be observed by students. If you prefer not to have a student involved in your care please let us know.
- Your procedure may be carried out by a qualified doctor or nurse training to perform the procedure under the close supervision of a trained endoscopist. This is an essential part of training new endoscopists. If you prefer not to have a trainee endoscopist involved in your care please let us know.
- On occasion company representatives may be present in the department for development purposes. If there is a representative in the department on the day of your procedure you will be informed by the nursing staff when you are admitted. If you do not wish a representative to be present during your care please tell the admitting nurse.
- If after reading this leaflet you have decided not to go ahead with your procedure please telephone the booking office immediately to cancel your appointment and contact the medical professional who requested your appointment to discuss your decision. Patients who do not attend their appointments cost the NHS approximately £450 per procedure. Please help us to use our NHS resources wisely. If you fail to attend without notifying us then you may not be offered another appointment.

## Introduction

You have been advised by your G.P or hospital doctor to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy. As with every medical procedure, the risk must be compared to the benefit of having the procedure carried out. The doctor who has requested the procedure will have considered this very carefully. However, it is your decision whether you wish to go ahead with the procedure or not and you are free to change your mind at any time.

**We need to have your formal written consent before we can carry out your 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 this booklet.

If there is anything you do not understand or anything you wish to discuss further, please discuss this with the admitting nurse. Bring the consent form with you and you can sign it after you have spoken to a nurse.

### **The consent form is a legal document- please read it carefully.**

Please remember to bring the consent form with you.

## What is a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

The examination you will be having is called a flexible sigmoidoscopy. This is an examination of the left hand side of your large bowel (colon) through your back passage. It is carried out by (or under the direct supervision of) a trained doctor or nurse called an Endoscopist.

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a very accurate way of looking at the lining of your large bowel, to establish whether there is any disease present. The instrument used is called a colonoscope (scope) and is a thin flexible tube. The scope has a light which is shone onto the lining of your bowel. It also has a very small camera which sends live images to a screen where it is viewed by the endoscopist as the scope is passed around your large bowel.

During the examination the Endoscopist may need to take some small tissue samples, called biopsies; this is painless. The samples will be looked at under a microscope by a special doctor called a Pathologist. The tissue sample and associated clinical information will be kept and may be used for teaching or research purposes aimed at improving diagnosis and treatment of bowel diseases. This may benefit other patients in the future. If you do not wish us to keep the tissue samples for this purpose or have any questions or concerns, please ask the admitting nurse before signing the consent form. Images from the flexible sigmoidoscopy will be retained in your

## What is a polyp?

A polyp is a protrusion from the lining of the bowel. Some polyps are attached to the bowel wall by a stalk and look like a mushroom, some are flat without a stalk. If a polyp is found, or if we already know you have a polyp, it is usually removed by the Endoscopist as it may grow and cause problems later. Polyps are removed or destroyed using a high frequency electrical current this is painless. Alternatively, the Endoscopist may take some samples for further examination or you may need to have a further procedure to remove the polyp on another day.

## What are the alternatives to flexible sigmoidoscopy?

An alternative examination is a CT scan, but the disadvantage of this is that we cannot collect tissue samples that may be important for a diagnosis. This may mean that you will still need to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy at a later date.

If you would like to discuss this option please speak to your doctor/G.P.

## What are the risks?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a safe examination for most people. Serious problems are rare. However, you need to weigh up the benefits against the risks of having the procedure. If you are elderly, frail or have certain pre-existing medical conditions these risks may be increased.

The main risks are:

- A tear (perforation) in the lining of the bowel. Nationally this happens to approximately 1 in 10,000 patients. The risks of a tear are higher with polyp removal. If we know before your flexible sigmoidoscopy that you have a large or difficult polyp, your endoscopist will discuss the risks with you in more detail. An operation may be required to repair the tear if it cannot be closed during the flexible sigmoidoscopy.
- Bleeding where we take a sample (biopsy) or have removed a polyp happens to approximately 1 in 150 patients but this is usually minor and often stops on its own.
- Small abnormalities may be missed – though this is unlikely

## Pain relief and sedation

We do not routinely offer a sedative for this procedure as it is a short procedure only looking at the left hand side of the bowel. It should not be painful but some patients feel slight discomfort (a trapped wind feeling) from the gas used to see the bowel more clearly.

Depending on your general health and suitability, you may be offered a gas that is inhaled called Entonox (gas and air). This is an effective pain relief which will wear off shortly after you stop breathing it in. You will be able to drive after 20 minutes and do not need an escort, although you may prefer to have someone accompany you after your examination.

If you would like to discuss this option, please discuss this with the nurse when you come for your examination.

## Bowel preparation instructions

You will need to take bowel preparation which usually consists of 6 Bisacodyl tablets. **You must follow the instructions below carefully.**

This bowel preparation is to make sure that your bowel is thoroughly cleaned and we can carry out a complete examination.

For some people a more suitable alternative preparation is required. If a different bowel preparation has been sent there will be separate instructions sent with this leaflet. **Please follow the instructions on the Salisbury NHS foundation Trust leaflet not the manufacturer's information.**

## 7 days before the examination

Stop taking Iron tablet. This is because iron tablets may make it difficult to clean the bowel effectively and may affect viewing the lining clearly.

## 4 days before the examination

- Stop taking constipating agents e.g. Lomotil, Imodium, codeine phosphate, etc.
- Stop taking any stool bulking agents e.g. Fibrogel, Regulan, Proctofibre
- Continue with all other medication until your appointment unless advised otherwise.

## 2 days before the examination

Have a low fibre supper. This should consist of plain white fish, chicken, white bread, eggs, cheese, white pasta, white rice or potatoes without skins. High fibre foods such as red meat, fruit, vegetables, cereals, nuts, salad and wholemeal foods **MUST** be avoided. You may have normal drinks

At 6pm take 2 Bisacodyl tablets with a glass of water

## The day before the examination

At 8am take 2 Bisacodyl tablets with a glass of water – Have a low fibre breakfast as above

Have a low fibre lunch. **After this DO NOT EAT any food until after your flexible sigmoidoscopy, but drink plenty of clear fluids**

At 6pm take 2 Bisacodyl tablets with a glass of water

## On the day of the procedure

Have clear fluids only for breakfast as described. **DO NOT EAT any food until after your flexible sigmoidoscopy, but drink plenty of clear fluids.** Clear fluid is water, smooth fruit juice (not containing 'bits'), fruit squash, fizzy drinks, tea or coffee without milk, clear soup, Bovril.

DAYS BEFORE APPOINTMENT	Food	Drinks
2 (2days before)	Low fibre diet	Normal
1 (day before)	low fibre breakfast low fibre lunch NO FOOD AFTER LUNCH	Clear fluids only after LUNCH
0 (appointment day)	NO FOOD	Clear fluids up to 2 hrs before appointment

### **Please note:**

**It is very important that you drink enough clear fluids to satisfy your thirst.** This will help the Bisacodyl to work more effectively and prevent you from becoming dehydrated. You may have as much clear fluid as you like up to 2 hours before your examination. Do not drink anything after this time.

Remember that Bisacodyl will cause frequent loose bowel movements 10-12 hours after taking a dose. Stay within easy reach of a toilet. It is normal to experience some intestinal cramping. Using Vaseline or a barrier cream on your bottom will help to prevent soreness.

### **What about my medicines?**

You should continue to take your routine medicines – **with the exception of iron tablets and stool bulking agents (as previously explained)**

#### **Patients with Diabetes**

If you have diabetes controlled by insulin please telephone your diabetic nurse for instructions about your medication

If you have diabetes controlled by tablets only, please telephone the Endoscopy booking office so we can advise you about your medication

#### **Anticoagulants (blood thinners)**

Please telephone the Endoscopy booking office **at least 2 weeks before** your flexible sigmoidoscopy appointment if you are taking Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Dabigatran, Rivaroxaban or Apixaban or medication you have been told thin the blood . You may require a blood test before your flexible sigmoidoscopy. **You may be asked to stop these medications but this must first be checked with a health professional. After you have telephoned to tell us, a nurse from endoscopy will telephone you back to advise you.**

If you take oral contraceptives the diarrhoea caused by the bowel preparation may reduce their effectiveness. Continue taking oral contraceptives but use other precautions for the remainder of that cycle.

### **What to bring with you**

Please bring a dressing gown and slippers with you.

Please leave all valuables at home. The hospital cannot accept responsibility for these items.

You may wish to bring a snack with you, to have on the way home, after the flexible sigmoidoscopy, especially if you have special dietary requirements or alternatively you may use the hospital restaurant after you leave the endoscopy unit.

### **What happens when I arrive in the Endoscopy unit?**

Please book in for your flexible sigmoidoscopy at the CT/MRI reception. Soon after you arrive you will be seen by a nurse who will go over your health questionnaire with you. This is to confirm that you are fit enough to undergo the examination. The nurse will record your blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen levels. If you are diabetic, your blood glucose level will be checked.

The nurse will make sure you understand the examination and you will be able to ask any further questions you have. The nurse will go over the consent form with you and you can sign it at this point. Taking of consent is delegated to registered nurses in Endoscopy.

The nurse will also ask you about your arrangements for getting home after your flexible sigmoidoscopy.

You will be asked to take a seat in the admission area. A nurse will take you to change just before your flexible sigmoidoscopy.

## **What happens during the flexible sigmoidoscopy examination?**

You will be escorted into the examination room where the nurses and Endoscopist will introduce themselves. Your identity and consent will be confirmed and you will have the opportunity to ask any final questions. The nurse looking after you will ask you to lie on your left hand side. The Endoscopist will move the scope through your back passage around the left hand side of your large bowel. A gas is passed gently into your bowel to make moving the scope around easier. You may feel some slight discomfort when the Endoscopist moves the scope around the natural bends in your bowel. A flexible sigmoidoscopy usually takes 15-20 minutes

## **How long will I be in the endoscopy unit?**

There are several procedure rooms within the unit carrying out different procedures. Due to this you may not be called through in the order you have arrived. You should expect to be in the unit for 1-2 hours. You may get dressed and leave straight after your examination. If you have had Entonox you will need to stay in Endoscopy for 20 minutes to allow the effects to wear off completely.

The unit also deals with emergencies and these will take priority over people with outpatient appointments. However, we will try to keep any delays to an absolute minimum.

## **After the examination**

You will be taken to get changed. If you are diabetic, your blood glucose will also be checked. You will be offered a drink and a biscuit. You should not have any pain other than discomfort from wind, which will settle after a few hours.

Before you leave the unit, a nurse or the Endoscopist will explain what was seen during the examination and whether you need any further appointments.

If a person is collecting you, you can ring them to ask them to return when you are ready to go home.

**In order to respect the privacy and dignity of our patients, friends and relatives are unable to come onto or wait in the endoscopy unit.**