



Flexible (Flex) Sigmoidoscopy

What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is an exam used to evaluate the lower part of the large intestine (colon). During a flexible sigmoidoscopy exam, a thin, flexible tube (sigmoidoscope) is inserted into the rectum. A tiny video camera at the tip of the tube allows the doctor to view the inside of the rectum, the sigmoid colon and most of the descending colon — just under the last 2 feet (about 50 centimeters) of the large intestine. If necessary, tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken through the scope during a flexible sigmoidoscopy exam.

Why does my doctor want to perform this exam?

- **Investigate intestinal signs and symptoms.**
The flexible sigmoidoscopy exam can help your doctor explore possible causes of abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, and changes in bowel habits, chronic diarrhea, and other intestinal problems.
- **Screen for colon cancer**
If you are age 50 or older and you have no colon cancer risk factors other than age, your doctor may recommend a flexible sigmoidoscopy exam.

How to prepare?

1. Take a laxative the night before your exam
2. Take one fleet enema the night prior to the procedure.
3. Take one fleet enema the morning of the procedure when you wake up.

What to expect during the exam?

Wearing a gown, you will begin the exam lying on your left side on the exam table, usually with your knees drawn toward your abdomen. The doctor will insert a sigmoidoscope into your rectum.

The sigmoidoscope contains a light and a tube that allows the doctor to place air into your colon. The air expands the colon, which provides a better view of the colon lining. When the scope is moved or air is introduced, you may feel abdominal cramping or the urge to move your bowels. A flexible sigmoidoscopy exam typically takes about 15 minutes. It may require slightly more time if biopsies are taken.