



## Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a medical procedure that allows doctors to examine the rectum's inner lining and the colon's lower part, known as the sigmoid colon. This test is crucial in diagnosing various bowel conditions, such as colitis, and evaluating symptoms like abdominal pain or rectal bleeding.

### What is Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy, often referred to as sigmoidoscopy, is an exam that evaluates the lower part of the large intestine, specifically the rectum and sigmoid colon. During the procedure, the doctor uses a sigmoidoscope—a thin, flexible tube with light and a tiny camera. This device is gently inserted into the rectum, allowing the doctor to view the inner lining of the rectum and sigmoid colon in real time.

### Why is this test performed?

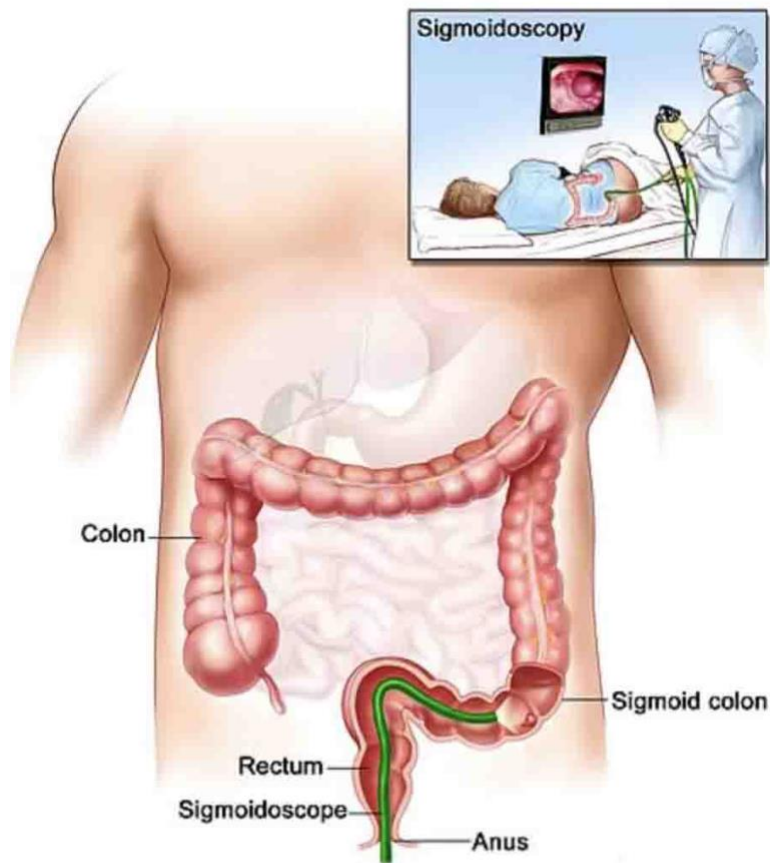
Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a versatile diagnostic tool. It can help doctors:

- Investigate the causes of abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, chronic diarrhea, and changes in bowel habits.
- Diagnose bowel conditions such as ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory bowel disease.
- Detect and remove polyps, which are small growths that could develop into cancer.

### What preparation is involved?

Before undergoing a flexible sigmoidoscopy, patients need to clean out their colon. This ensures that the doctor gets a clear view during the examination. Preparation might involve:

- Following a special diet a day before the test.
- Taking laxatives.



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- Using enemas.

It's essential to follow the doctor's instructions closely to ensure the colon is thoroughly cleaned.

### **Will I be sedated?**

Unlike a colonoscopy, sedation is not typically used for a flexible sigmoidoscopy. The procedure is relatively quick, and most patients experience only mild discomfort. However, if you're anxious about the procedure, discuss your concerns with your doctor. In some cases, sedation or pain relief might be offered.

### **How is this test performed?**

During the procedure:

- The patient lies on their left side with their knees drawn up to their chest.
- The doctor inserts the lubricated sigmoidoscope into the rectum and advances it into the sigmoid colon.
- Air is gently pumped into the colon to expand it, providing a better view.
- The camera sends images to a monitor, allowing the doctor to examine the colon's lining.
- Tiny tissue samples (biopsies) can be taken, or polyps can be removed during the procedure.

### **After the test?**

After the procedure, patients might feel some cramping or bloating due to the air introduced into the colon. These sensations typically subside quickly. If biopsies were taken or polyps removed, there might be a small amount of bleeding. However, any persistent or heavy bleeding, severe abdominal pain, or fever should be reported to the doctor immediately.

### **What are the risks?**

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is a safe procedure, but like all medical procedures, there are some risks, including:

- Bleeding, especially if polyps are removed, or a biopsy is taken.
- A tear in the colon's lining, although this is rare.
- Adverse reactions to the preparation process.

### **How about insurance coverage?**

Most health insurance plans cover flexible sigmoidoscopy, mainly when it's used for colorectal cancer screening. However, coverage can vary based on the reason for the test and the specific insurance plan. It's always a good idea to check with your insurance provider before the procedure to understand any out-of-pocket costs.

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## Center For Digestive Health & Nutrition

725 Cherrington Parkway • Moon Township, PA 15108  
412.262.1000 • [www.gihealth.com](http://www.gihealth.com) • IG: @thedigestivetract

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