

Procedures/Diagnostic Tests

Sigmoidoscopy

You are scheduled for sigmoidoscopy. This procedure allows your doctor to view your lower bowel (also called the colon). Your lower bowel will be examined with a slender, hollow, lighted tube. Sigmoidoscopy enables your doctor to get important diagnostic information about your condition. The procedure is also done to obtain, if necessary, a small piece of tissue (biopsy) to look at under a microscope. It will be done in the endoscopy suite or treatment room.

Preparation

- To allow the lower bowel to be seen clearly, you may need an enema. Your doctor will order enemas for you, as necessary.
- If your sigmoidoscopy is scheduled for the morning, do not eat breakfast. If the procedure is scheduled for later in the day, you may eat a light breakfast, but you must not eat again until after the procedure.

Procedure

- You will be asked to lie on your left side, with your knees bent towards your chest.
- The doctor will examine your anus and rectum. Then, the doctor will insert a gloved finger into your rectum. After this, the doctor will gently insert an instrument into your rectum. You may feel pressure, like you are going to have a bowel movement. This is from the pressure of the instrument, and will last only a brief time.
- A small amount of air will be pumped into your bowel. This may cause some abdominal cramping.
- When the procedure is over, the instrument will be removed.
- The procedure usually lasts about 10 minutes.

After the procedure

- You may resume your usual activities and eat as you normally would.
- The only side effect is a temporary feeling of abdominal cramping from the air that was pumped into your bowel.

If you have questions about the procedure, please ask. Your nurse and doctor are ready to assist you at all times.

Special instructions

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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