

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Introduction

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is the best method of looking at the lining of the left side of your large bowel (colon) to establish whether there is any disease present. It also allows tissue samples (biopsies) to be taken for further investigation. A long flexible tube, called a colonoscope is used in this procedure. The scope has a light and a camera at one end which shares images of the lining of your bowel onto screen which enables the endoscopist to have a clear view and to check whether or not disease or inflammation is present.

During the investigation, the endoscopist may need to take some samples from the lining of your colon for analysis. This is painless. The samples will be retained. A video recording and/or photographs may also be taken and kept with your health records.

Polyps (abnormal growths of tissue) from the lining of the bowel can also be removed at this time. Some polyps are attached to the intestinal wall by a stalk and look like a mushroom; others are flat without a stalk. The endoscopist may take samples of the polyps to be tested, as they may grow and could later cause problems.

The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. Your doctor/ nurse specialist will discuss with you at your outpatient appointment if a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is required.

Guidance for Patients

Why do I need to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

The reason for this will depend on your particular condition, but your doctor may offer it to

- Try to find the cause of your symptoms, such as bleeding from the back passage, help with treatment, and if necessary, to decide on further investigation.
- Do a follow-up inspection of previous disease.
- Check on an abnormality normally seen on an x-ray.

Your endoscopy will be performed by either a consultant endoscopist or a nurse endoscopist. We have a team of highly skilled nurse endoscopists in the delivery of this service and work in partnership with our consultants. We have training lists which you will be informed of on the day should you wish to decline the trainee being present.

Are there any risks associated with this procedure?

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Although the following complications can occur, they are rare:

- Perforation or tear of the lining of the bowel (risk approximately 1 in every 5,000 examinations). An operation is nearly always required to repair the hole. The risk of perforation is always higher if polyps are being removed.
- Bleeding may occur at the site of the biopsy or polyp removal (risk approximately 1 in every 100 to 200 examinations) where this is done. However, this bleeding tends to be minor and if it does not stop on its own, it can be controlled by cauterization or treatment with an injection.
- Conscious sedation (if given) can occasionally cause problems with breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. If any of these problems do occur, they usually do not last long. Careful monitoring by a fully trained endoscopy nurse ensures that any potential problems can be identified and treated rapidly.
- Lost/missed tissue samples which may require the flexible sigmoidoscopy to be repeated and/or result in a delayed diagnosis. There are folds within the bowel that can hide small lesions (abnormal areas of tissue). Although endoscopists are trained to thoroughly look at the colon, there is still a known but small risk that lesions may be missed.

Are there any alternatives to this procedure?

Yes, there is an examination called CT colonography where patients are asked to drink a special contrast liquid before the procedure. Air is then passed through a tube and into the back passage to inflate the bowel. This allows polyps and tumours to show up on CT scans. The disadvantage of the CT colonography is that the test does not allow biopsies to be taken or polyps to be removed. The procedure also involves a significant amount of radiation.

Additional information

While waiting for your appointment, it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. To support our local residents to stop smoking or lose weight, the following services are available to provide free stop smoking and weight management support to our community.

Call: Andover War Memorial Hospital - 01962 863 535

Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital - 01256 473 202

Royal County Hampshire Hospital - 01962 863 535

Email: myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk

Website: www.hampshirehospitals.nhs.uk

Health Lifestyles – We are here to help you and offer different levels of support to maintain a healthy weight and to stop smoking including telephone support, virtual and app-based support options.

Stop Smoking Service - <https://www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk/>. The stop smoking service provides a range of options to help you quit including support from an advisor, stop smoking medications, e-cigarettes and a digital offer for those who wish to quit by themselves.

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If you are not ready to quit just yet but would like more information on how to protect your family, [Smoke Free Homes](#), advises on how to make your home and car smoke free.

Weight Management Service - www.shapeup4lifehampshire.co.uk. The service supports adults aged 18 years or over who want to lose weight and have been identified as obese.

Find out your BMI

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle if you're an adult (18 years or over) living in Hampshire (but not Southampton or Portsmouth) and your body mass index (BMI) is above average. [Use the NHS calculator to find out your BMI](#). If it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight.

BMI of 30+.

If your BMI is 30 or higher, you qualify for free support from [Shapeup4life Hampshire](#).

BMI of 28+

You can get free support from Shapeup4life Hampshire if you haven't paid to attend sessions with a commercial weight management provider in the last three months, and at least one of the following applies:

- you have Type 1 and 2 Diabetes or Metabolic Syndrome.
- you have problems with your heart, circulation, hypertension or high blood pressure.
- you have been diagnosed with anxiety/depression.
- you need to lose weight before receiving another medical treatment or surgery.
- you have a serious long-term health condition that is adversely affected by your weight such as muscular skeletal disorders (back pain, mobility issues) and asthma.
- you're from a black or ethnic minority background.

[Learn more and sign up with Shapeup4life Hampshire](#)

BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher, [the NHS Weight Loss Plan](#) will help you start healthier eating habits, be more active, and start losing weight.

The [NHS 12 week fitness plan](#) will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

Healthy eating and being active

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

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- [One You Eat Better](#) (website) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.
- [Better Health - Get Active](#) (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.
- [Sugar Smart](#) is a campaign to raise awareness of hidden sugars, recommended levels and healthy alternatives by encouraging individuals, groups, businesses, schools and organisation to join the campaign and make a pledge. To find out how you can join in, become sugar smart and make good choices about what you, your family, colleagues eat.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your condition suddenly worsens while you are waiting, you should seek advice.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain or a significant reduction in mobility, you should in the first instance contact your General Practitioner for review and advice.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

A list of GP practices with relevant contact details are available on the following website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=163127>

Contact Us

Andover & Winchester: 01962 828322

Email: EndoscopyAdminRHCH@hhft.nhs.uk

Basingstoke: 01256 313332 (select option 1 when prompted)

Email: EndoscopyAdminBNHH@hhft.nhs.uk

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Please direct any My Planned Care enquiries to
myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk or 01962 825 616.



Hampshire Hospitals
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