

Community Endoscopy Service

Procedural Risks

What is a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy ?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure that allows us to examine the lining of the lower part of the colon (large bowel). It is useful in diagnosing a range of symptoms and for monitoring pre-existing conditions.

A flexible tube called a colonoscope which, is about the size of your index finger, is passed through your back passage and manoeuvred around the left-hand side of the colon by a specially trained doctor or nurse, called an endoscopist. The lining of the bowel is examined thoroughly by the endoscopist throughout the procedure to help determine a cause for your symptoms.

The purpose and intended benefit/s of this procedure is/are:

- To aid diagnosis and formulate a treatment plan for routine diagnostic investigations, planned surveillance or follow up.

Possible side effects of the procedure:

- Mild abdominal discomfort, such as cramp, soreness in the back passage, loose motions for a few days or slight bleeding.

Possible complications of the procedure:

- Bleeding happens about once in every 16,000 procedures and once in every 1,000 procedures when removal of a polyp is necessary. Occasionally it is severe and requires a blood transfusion.
- Perforation – a hole in the bowel wall that may require an operation to repair it. This may happen once in every 1500 procedures.
- There is a risk that a cancer may not be identified, 5-6% possibility – this may be due to poor bowel prep, folds in the bowel wall or for technical reasons.

Alternative treatment:

- In the unlikely event that a flexible sigmoidoscopy is not a suitable procedure for you, an investigative procedure called a CT scan may be an appropriate alternative for you. Your GP will refer you to the appropriate environment for this procedure as it is not available within our endoscopy units. The decision to send you for a CT scan will be made by your referrer (GP or Consultant)