

## Useful Contact Details

Endoscopy booking office,  
Lister Hospital, Stevenage

☎ 01438 284062

## Additional Information

Every effort is made to provide you with a choice of appointment. If you are unable to attend the appointment that is offered to you, please contact the Endoscopy booking office to either change or cancel the appointment.

If you decide that you do not wish to attend your appointment, please let the booking office know. If you do not attend your appointment, and have not let us know, there is a chance you will be removed from the waiting list.

# Patient Information

## Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

An examination of the large intestine (bowel)

## Endoscopy Centre

[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

You can request this  
information in a different  
format or another language.

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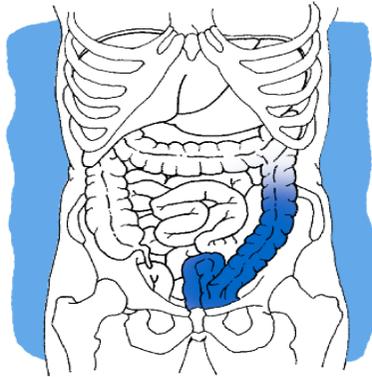
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## Introduction

You have been advised to have a lower gastrointestinal endoscopy to help find the cause of your symptoms. The procedure is called a **flexible sigmoidoscopy**. This leaflet has been designed to give you an idea of what the procedure is, the benefits, the risks, and the alternative procedures.



## What is a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is a procedure that allows the endoscopist (the person performing the procedure) to look directly at the large bowel (the colon) with a flexible video endoscope. It is passed through the anus (via the bottom) into the large bowel. This gives a clear view of the lining of the large bowel allowing the endoscopist to make a diagnosis or check up on an existing condition. The endoscopist can perform biopsies (a sample of tissue taken painlessly using forceps). It is also possible to remove polyps during the procedure. Polyps are abnormal growths of tissue rather like warts. Some types of polyps can become cancerous if left and are best removed.

## Reasons for having a flexible sigmoidoscopy

You may have been advised to have this procedure if you have:

- bleeding from your anus
- pain in the lower abdomen (tummy)
- persistent diarrhoea
- changes to your bowel habits
- a strong family history of bowel cancer
- been placed on a bowel cancer screening pathway
- have an existing condition that needs reviewing such as Crohn's disease or colitis.

## Benefits

The benefits of having a flexible sigmoidoscopy is the ability to directly see any abnormalities, to be able to take biopsies or remove polyps, and to treat areas of bleeding. Also, there is no exposure to radiation.

## Risks

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is usually a safe procedure and the risk of serious complications is very low. Possible complications include perforation (a piercing in the bowel lining), bleeding and there is a possibility of you having an adverse reaction to the medication given.

## Procedures that can be done instead of a flexible sigmoidoscopy are:

- **Barium enema** - This test can examine the large intestine using X-rays and barium sulphate. The barium sulphate coats the lining of your bowel making it easier to see on X-ray.
- **CT (computerised tomography)** - This is a special type of X-ray machine that can give more details than normal X-rays. However, it cannot be used to take biopsies or remove polyps so you may still need a flexible sigmoidoscopy.