

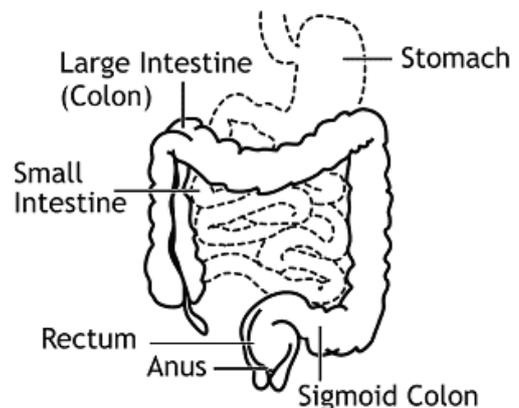
## Flexible Sigmoidoscopy Indications

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is the limited examination of the distal large intestine using a flexible endoscope called a colonoscope. This examination usually involves limited cleansing of the large bowel using an enema to clear faecal matter so that the best possible views are obtained. Poor bowel cleansing can compromise the examination as small lesions, such as small polyps or very early cancers, can be missed. The procedure can produce discomfort as the camera passes around various bends in the bowel, due to the bowel stretching, and intravenous sedation will be used to ensure your comfort. It is necessary to have a person take you home safely from the hospital and care for you until you have fully recovered from the effects of the sedation.

### Flexible Sigmoidoscopy Indications

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is used to:

- Investigate the large intestine for diseases like inflammatory bowel disease or cancer
- To screen for polyps to help prevent bowel cancer
- To investigate rectal bleeding or diarrhoea
- To obtain tissue for analysis for conditions including chronic diarrhoea, graft-versus-host disease and others
- When a patient cannot have a full colonoscopy



### Preparation

After you arrive in endoscopy unit, the nursing staff will administer an enema to clean the colon. Because you are likely to receive intravenous sedation, you have to fast for six hours prior to the test. If you are taking anti-coagulants or aspirin or other blood thinning medications, discuss the need to stop them prior to your test with the doctor.

### Flexible Sigmoidoscopy Procedure

You will be asked to arrive at least half an hour before your test. You will be given a hospital gown to change into. You will have to remove your underwear as well. The endoscopy unit nursing staff will usually have instructions to administer the enema to empty bowel. After the enema has worked, you will be taken into the procedure room. The nursing staff will help you along the way with any questions or concerns.

If you are having sedation, the anaesthetist will insert an intravenous cannula. The intravenous access is required to administer the sedation and possibly some intravenous fluids if you have become dehydrated while you were fasting. A clear plastic oxygen mask is usually placed before you are sedated and there will be some monitoring equipment attached by the anaesthetist to keep you safe during the sedation. The test takes between 5 to 15 minutes usually, depending on how complex the procedure is, and you may be sleepy sometimes afterwards.

### After your procedure

Once you have recovered, you can eat, drink and change back into your clothes. When you have recovered sufficiently, you can be taken home to rest for the remainder of the day. You should not drive for 24 hours post procedure due to the sedation medications used. Rarely, admission to the hospital for observation may be necessary. If you did not require sedation, you will recover very quickly and may go home sooner. If you receive sedation, you will also be unable to take public transport or to see a taxi to go home unless you have an accompanying adult with you. If you do not have someone to accompany you home and stay with you for 12 hours after, your procedure may be cancelled so please discuss this with your specialist ahead of time to make suitable arrangements.

## Complications

Every procedure carries risks and Flexible sigmoidoscopy has several risks due to the nature of the procedure. Passing a colonoscope through the average bowel poses few problems but sometimes the colon can be difficult to negotiate. Reasons for the difficulty can include previous surgery in the abdomen or pelvis that makes the colon stuck in place, tight structures, or bends in the colon, the presence of severe colonic injury, severe inflammation of the passage of the colonoscope, or gas insufflation used during the procedure. The common risk is discomfort during the procedure, usually managed by sedation. The most severe complication is perforation or tearing of the bowel. If the colon is damaged, it may have to be repaired surgically and this may require an open operation (laparotomy) and possibly a stoma (external drainage bag) – a stoma is generally temporary. Overall, the risk of damage to the bowel is about 1 in 3000 or less.

Removing polyps can lead to bleeding and about one in a hundred patients that have bleeding may require further treatments, such as blood tests or even a transfusion. Severe diathermy for the removal of large polyps reduces the bleeding risk but may lead to thermal bowel damage – this depends on the size and type of polyp and increases the risk of a bowel injury to about 1 in 500 or larger polyps.

The risk of a major disability or damage to the nerves, heart, lungs, or death resulting from this procedure is exceedingly low. Small polyps are removed without the use of electrocautery or diathermy as this has been found to be safer, with less risk of delayed bleeding.

Some complications such as pain, bleeding, or post-polypectomy perforation can occur as late as two weeks after the procedure. If you develop any concerning symptoms you should contact the specialist or the hospital immediately. If you are unwell, it is recommended you attend the Mater Private Emergency 301 Vulture street, South Brisbane 07 3163 1000 or your nearest hospital's emergency department. All care and effort is taken to ensure you are safe and that any risk of complications is minimised. You will be told if any particular problems occurred or are likely to occur as a result of your test before you leave the hospital. If there is immediate concern about a possible complication you may be admitted to the hospital.

If you have any questions about this information, discuss these before you attend your procedure. You can telephone on the numbers below if needed.

### Contact Details

Private Mater Private Hospital – Endoscopy Unit  
Level 6 Mater Private Hospital  
301 Vulture Street, South Brisbane QLD 4101  
Phone: 07 3163 1044 Fax: 07 3163 1185

Rooms Mater Hill Gastroenterology  
Suite 2 Level 2 Salmon Building  
537 Stanley Street South Brisbane QLD 4101  
Phone: 07 3163 7820 Fax: 07 3163 1371

Emergency Mater Private Emergency  
301 Vulture Street, South Brisbane QLD 4101  
Phone: 07 3163 1000 Fax: 07 3163 1032

*For urgent enquiries during the weekend please call the Mater Switch on 07 3163 8111 and ask to speak with your specialist.*