What is flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy lets your doctor examine the lining of the rectum and a portion of the colon (large intestine) by inserting a flexible tube about the thickness of your finger into the anus and slowly advanced into the rectum and lower part of the colon.

What preparation is required?

Your doctor will tell you what cleansing routine to use. In general, preparation consists of one or two enemas prior to the procedure but could include laxatives or dietary modifications as well.

Should I continue my current medications?

Most medications can be continued as usual. Inform your doctor about medications that you’re taking- particularly aspirin products or anticoagulants (blood thinner such as coumadin or heparin) or clopidogrel, as well as any allergies you have to medications or latex.

What can I expect during flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Flexible sigmoidoscopy is usually well tolerated. Most of the time it can be done in your doctor’s office without sedation. You might experience a feeling of pressure, bloating or cramping during the procedure. You will lie on your side while your doctor advances the sigmoidoscope through the rectum and colon. As your doctor withdraws the instrument, he or she will carefully examine the lining of the colon.

What if the flexible sigmoidoscopy finds something abnormal?

If your doctor sees an area that needs further evaluation, your doctor might take a biopsy (tissue sample) to be analyzed. Obtaining a biopsy does not cause any pain or discomfort. Biopsies are used to identify many conditions. If your doctor finds polyps, he or she might take a biopsy as well. Your doctor will likely ask you to have a colonoscopy to remove any large or small polyps.

What happens after a flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Your doctor will explain the results to you when the procedure is done. You might feel bloating or mild cramping during the examination. This will disappear quickly when you pass gas. You should be able to eat and resume your normal activities after leaving your doctors office or the hospital, assuming you did not receive any sedative medication.
What are possible complications of flexible sigmoidoscopy?

Complications are rare, but it is important to recognize early signs of possible complications. Contact your doctor if you notice severe abdominal pain, fever and chills, or rectal bleeding. Note rectal bleeding can occur several days after the exam.