
Sigmoidoscopy and Proctoscopy

A sigmoidoscopy and a proctoscopy are procedures that allow a medical professional to examine the interior of the large intestine and the anal area to check for precancerous polyps, colon cancer, and rectal cancer. The sigmoidoscopy part of the exam involves the use of a flexible telescope-like instrument to view high up into the part of the bowel called the sigmoid and lower colon. The proctoscopy part of the exam deals with the examination of the anus and rectum. Other instruments also allow the physician to view the colon at even a higher level, and this is sometimes called a colonoscopy. A sigmoidoscopy and proctoscopy exam every 10 years after the age of 50 is recommended. If appropriate, your doctor may also want to examine the colon to check for the cause of rectal bleeding, diarrhea, or constipation.

During the examination, a thin, flexible medical telescope is inserted into your rectum. You may feel some discomfort, such as pressure or cramping. However, this won't last long because the examination usually takes less than five minutes.

Before your examination, you must take two steps that will both help make you more comfortable during the procedure and also help the examination yield complete information:

1. Drink only clear liquids the day before and the morning of your examination.
2. Drink a special liquid prescribed by your medical professional to clean out your bowels for the procedure. Your medical professional may prescribe two bottles of a preparation called Fleet's Phospho Soda or another bowel preparation liquid, which acts as a mild laxative. You will be given instructions about when to drink each bottle.

For women, you should know that menstruation does not interfere with the examination. However, if you're menstruating on the day of your appointment, you may reschedule the procedure if you prefer. If you cannot keep your appointment for any reason, please call ahead of time to cancel and reschedule.

Once the brief examination is complete, you can resume all normal activities and eating patterns immediately. Your doctor will discuss the results of the exam with you, and determine whether any additional action is needed.

* * * * *

For more health information ...

- Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.