



Western Health  
and Social Care Trust

INFORMATION LEAFLET

## **Flexible Sigmoidoscopy**

### **Advice before a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy**

**Where to attend: Endoscopy Unit,  
South Wing, Altnagelvin**

**Bring a list of your medication with you**

**Expect to be in the Unit for 2 to 4 hours**

**For queries contact 028 71296179  
Extension 216910 or 216911**

Your doctor has requested that you have a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy. This leaflet provides information on the procedure and aims to answer questions you may have.

### **Why do I need a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

A Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is used to investigate a variety of problems, for example:

- Haemorrhoids
- Abdominal pain
- Change in bowel habit
- Bleeding from the back passage
- Polyps

### **How is a flexible sigmoidoscopy performed?**

A nurse will care for you during the procedure and a Doctor or Nurse Specialist will perform the procedure. Following a full explanation, you will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to have the procedure. We will answer any questions you may have before starting.

You will be asked to lie on your left side with your knees bent. The endoscopist will begin by examining your back passage and then gently pass the flexible tube (endoscope) to examine the lower part of your large bowel. Air will be passed through the colonoscope to inflate your bowel, to give a clear view of the lining. This may give you some cramps and discomfort; however this should not last long.

Most people can tolerate this test without any sedation; however, if needed gas and air is available to make the test easier. If you have Entonox, this means that your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be affected for up to 30 minutes even though you may feel wide awake. You will stay in the department during this time. The test will last approximately 10-20 minutes, but it may last longer if tissue samples (biopsies/polyps) are taken.

A **biopsy** is when a small piece of tissue is taken from the bowel with tiny forceps and removed through the endoscope. This procedure is painless and you will not be aware of it being done.

**Polyps** are growths of tissue on the bowel wall that can vary in size. They are usually benign (not cancers), but if left may progress to cancer. Most polyps can be removed painlessly and completely during the test. If you have a polyp, the endoscopist will consider whether it should be removed for more careful examination in the laboratory and discuss this with you after the test.

### **What are the complications of a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy?**

As with every medical procedure, the risk must be compared to the benefit of having the procedure. Flexible Sigmoidoscopy is classed as an invasive procedure and therefore, carries risks/ complications.

The major risks/ complications include;

- Bleeding from the biopsy site or from where a polyp has been removed and occurs in fewer than 1 in every 100 tests carried out. This usually settles on its own.
- A tear or damage to the lining of the bowel - perforation (fewer than 1 in every 1000 tests carried out). The risk is slightly higher if a polyp has been removed. You may need an operation to repair any damage.

### **How do I prepare for the test?**

- It is advised that you wear loose fitting clothing, as this is more comfortable for you after the test.
- To allow a clear view during the test, your bowel must be empty. Therefore, it is essential that you follow the bowel preparation instructions that have been enclosed with this booklet. If you do **not** receive any bowel preparation with this leaflet, don't worry: you will be given an enema when you arrive in the unit. You will be advised of the fasting instructions and time of your appointment in the enclosed letter.
- If you are taking any of the following drugs please contact the unit on 028 71296179 Ext: 216910/216911.

**Plavix (Clopidogrel), Warfarin, Dabigatran  
(Pradaxa) Rivaroxaban (Xarelto),  
Apixaban(Eliquis), Ticagrelor (Brilique),  
Prasugrel (Efient)**

- If you are the main carer for someone at home please ensure arrangements are made to look after that person.
- If you think you may be **pregnant** do not take your preparation, contact your GP and inform the unit.

Please note your appointment time is your arrival time on the unit, NOT the time of your test. Your test will happen sometime later. Occasionally delays may be unavoidable.

**After your Procedure** - You will be given time to rest and offered a drink and something to eat before discharge. You will receive a patient centred report and discharge information before you leave the department. The staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

If there are any concerns following the procedure please seek advice from our staff on the contact number below.

**Helpline number is:** 028 71296179  
Extension 216910 or 216911

Information contained in this leaflet does not replace professional advice from the healthcare team responsible for your care