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How to Prepare for your Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

You are to have an examination of the bowel by a flexible lighted fiberoptic instrument. The preparation for this examination is very simple. From the drug store obtain:

Two Fleets enemas (ready to use, sodium phosphate) (these are available without a prescription/over the counter)

Limit yourself to a clear liquid diet (plain water, apple juice, plain tea/coffee, jello) from after dinner the night before until after your exam. Be sure to keep your fluid intake up!

Use 2 Fleets enemas (one after the other) according to package instructions 2 hours before your exam. If Fleets enemas are not available, consult the pharmacist and use their substitute enema. The enema will cleanse your lower bowel, permitting a clear view of its surface.

If you are a diabetic or have a dietary problem, you should check with the doctor's nurse before the day of the exam for additional instructions.

When you come to the office you will be asked to undress from the waist down and lie on a table on your left side. You will not need to change positions during the exam. The doctor will generously lubricate the instrument in order to provide for your comfort. The instrument (which is far smaller than a normal bowel movement) will be inserted through the rectum. You will hear the sound of an air pump and suction machine as the exam takes place. Some air is introduced into the bowel to allow for a clear field of vision. Some cramping may occur during the procedure. By letting the doctor know when any cramping occurs, he or she can take steps to lessen or eliminate it. The exam usually takes 10 to 20 minutes.

After the examination most people have no symptoms except for the passage of the residual air introduced into the bowel to allow the exam. Occasionally a biopsy is taken of suspicious areas. This is painless but might cause a small amount of blood to be seen on the next bowel movement. Any more than a slight spotting of blood should lead you to call the doctor.

Should you have any questions not answered by the above information, be sure to call us now, before your examination date. We will be glad to answer them for you.