



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Rigid Sigmoidoscopy

A guide to the test for patients,
relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact the outpatient department at the hospital where you are being treated:

York Hospital

Tel: 01904 926772

Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Scarborough Hospital

Tel: 01723 342026

Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Bridlington Hospital

Tel: 01262 423039

Bessingby Road, Bridlington, YO16 4QP

Contents	Page
What is a rigid sigmoidoscopy?	4
Why do I need a rigid sigmoidoscopy?	5
Are there any risks with this test?	5
What are the benefits of this test?	5
What happens during the test?	6
What happens after the test?	7
Are there any alternatives?	7
What do I need to do before the test?	8
What happens when I arrive in the Outpatient Department?	8
When will I know the results of the test?	9
Going home	10
Further contact	10
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	11
Teaching, training and research	11
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)	11

Please read this leaflet before your appointment in the Outpatient Department. If you need any assistance with the preparation for this test please ring your GP several days before your appointment.

We hope this leaflet will answer most of your questions, but it may not answer them all. If you do have any questions or are worried after reading this leaflet, please do contact the Outpatient Department before your test or speak to one of the staff in clinic when you arrive.

Outpatient Department contact details:

Scarborough Hospital: 01723 342026

Bridlington Hospital: 01262 423039

York Hospital: 01904 726772

What is a rigid sigmoidoscopy?

A sigmoidoscopy is a test that allows the doctor to look directly at the lower end of your bowel, which is called the rectum. In order to do the test a sigmoidoscope is carefully passed through the back passage into the colon. The sigmoidoscope is a short rigid sterile tube, about the thickness of your index finger, with a bright light at the end. This gives the doctor a clear view. From this, they are able to check whether there is any disease present. Occasionally a small sample of tissue is taken for analysis (a biopsy). This is usually painless.

Why do I need a rigid sigmoidoscopy?

This test is used to help find the cause of the problems you have, to help decide what the most effective treatment might be.

Are there any risks with this test?

A sigmoidoscopy may result in some rectal bleeding up to 24 to 48 hours after the procedure. You may experience some 'windy' discomfort or a feeling of wanting to open the bowel but don't worry – you will not have incontinence.

What are the benefits of this test?

The test allows the doctor to see whether there is any disease present in your bowel and to decide what, if any, further treatment is required. Any tissue samples (biopsies) taken during the test will be analysed and the results will give your doctor important information about any disease present.

What happens during the test?

In the examination room, you will be made comfortable on a couch lying on your left side. A nurse will help you and will stay with you throughout the test.

You may experience some discomfort.

The sigmoidoscope will be gently inserted through the anus into the large bowel after applying a lubricant gel. Air will be passed gently through the tube to expand the bowel and give the doctor a clearer view. The doctor may take some samples of tissue (biopsy). This is painless.

You may get some wind like pains but they will not last long. You may also get the sensation of wanting to go to the toilet, but as your bowel is empty, this will not happen.

You may pass some wind; although this is embarrassing, the staff will understand what is causing it.

When the test is finished, the sigmoidoscope is removed painlessly. The entire procedure usually takes less than five minutes.

York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is involved in the teaching or training of medical staff who may be in attendance at some patient consultations. However, there is an 'opt out' option for any patient who prefers to see a doctor without training medical staff in attendance.

What happens after the test?

You may feel a little bloated with wind pains but these usually settle quickly.

Following this examination it is likely that you will need to have a further test, the details of which will be explained to you by the doctor. This will be arranged as a separate appointment. We will contact you before about the appointment and the preparation for this.

Are there any alternatives?

There are alternative examinations, but these do not necessarily provide all the information that the doctor needs to make a diagnosis. It is likely you will need further investigation, but the findings at rigid sigmoidoscopy will guide the doctor in deciding which test is most appropriate for you.

What do I need to do before the test?

Often no preparation is needed. You may be asked to insert a glycerine suppository that we will give you, if so we will ask you to use this suppository the morning of the test.

If you think you might have a difficulty in inserting the suppository please contact your GP and a district nurse will be asked to help you.

If you are taking iron tablets, these should be stopped five days before the test.

What happens when I arrive in the Outpatient Department?

When you come to the outpatient department the staff will explain the test to you. It is important for you to understand about the test and the implications of having it.

When will I know the results of the test?

Often the doctor will be able to tell you of the results of your test straightaway. If the doctor takes a sample (biopsy) the results will take several days, and will be communicated to you and your GP by letter, together with any plans for further investigation or treatment. If you need to be seen again in the clinic, we will post the date and time of this to your home address.

It is a good idea to have someone with you when you speak to the doctor at your follow up appointment because it is very easy to forget what has been said. You may also find it useful to write down any questions you may like to ask the doctor.

Going home

We recommend that you have a relative or friend with you when you come to clinic for the test, but this is not essential.

Your bowel movements should get back to normal within a day or two of the test.

Further contact

If you have any questions that have not been answered in this leaflet or are worried about any aspect of the test please speak to the staff in clinic or telephone us. If you require further information about the procedure please contact the web site of the British Digestive Disorders Foundation at www.corecharity.org.uk

Outpatient Department contact details:

Scarborough Hospital: 01723 342026

Bridlington Hospital: 01262 423039

York Hospital: 01904 726772

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Mr Nick Woodcock, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon,
The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or
telephone 01904 721154.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

Bu bilgileri değişik bir lisanda ya da formatta istiyorsanız lütfen telefon ediniz ya da e-posta gönderiniz

Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: access@york.nhs.uk

Owner	Mr Woodcock, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon
Date first issued	April 2005
Review Date	January 2026
Version	4 (reissued January 2023)
Approved by	MDT
Document Reference	PIL 32 v4.3

© 2023 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
All Rights reserved.