PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Bowel Preparation for Your First Visit with Your Colorectal Surgeon

This information will help you get ready for your first appointment with your colorectal surgeon. If your Patient Access Specialist tells you that you’re going to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy during your appointment, you may need to do a bowel preparation.

About Your Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

A flexible sigmoidoscopy is an exam where your doctor checks your lower colon (large intestine) and rectum. This is done by placing a thin, flexible scope into your rectum and up into your colon to check for abnormal changes. The scope has a tiny camera in it so your doctor can take a biopsy (sample of tissue) or pictures.

During this procedure, you will be lying on your left side. The procedure lasts about 5 to 10 minutes.

Before Your Appointment

To get ready for this procedure, you may be asked to do a bowel preparation to clean out your lower colon by giving yourself 2 saline enemas. Your Patient Access Specialist will let you know if you need to do this. If you do, follow the instructions below.

If you’re experiencing severe rectal pain or bleeding, tell your Patient Access Specialist because you may not need to do a bowel preparation. You should also tell them if you’re taking any medications to thin your blood, such as warfarin (Coumadin®), dalteparin (Fragmin®), or enoxaparin (Lovenox®).
Buy supplies
Buy 2 saline enemas, such as Fleet®. You can buy these over-the-counter at most pharmacies. You don’t need a prescription.

Start your bowel preparation
You can follow your regular diet and take all your usual medications. For the enema, follow the instructions on the label of the enema bottle.

Give yourself the first enema 2 hours before you leave for your appointment. Give yourself the second enema 30 minutes later.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, call your Patient Access at 646-497-9065. You can reach a staff member Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, call Patient Access 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.