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Flexible Sigmoidoscopy Instructions

The American Cancer Society recommends that all individuals over the age of 50 be screened periodically for colon and rectal cancer. This is best accomplished through yearly stool specimens (collected to detect blood) and a flexible sigmoidoscope examination every 3-5 years.

The flexible sigmoidoscope is the latest alternative to the old, larger, uncomfortable rigid proctoscopic examination. This smaller caliber, flexible, lighted instrument is gently inserted into the rectum and gradually passed up into the lower colon. This instrument allows the patients to be in a more comfortable position lying on their side rather than the antiquated "ostrich position".

Some patients are rater anxious about having this procedure performed. Modern medicine allows for control of that anxiety and discomfort. If you are a little nervous and would like a minor tranquilizer to ease your tension just before the procedure, a prescription for one can be given.

Some patients cramp easily or may have had cramps when they had this same procedure previously. There is a small tablet that can be dissolved under the tongue just prior to the exam to lessen the cramping.

In preparation for this procedure, a cleansing of the lower bowel is necessary. Begin your preparation the day BEFORE the test and after your usual breakfast.

1. Liquid lunch (such as bullion, tea, coffee (without dairy), Jell-O, popsicles, Gatorade, and apple, grape or cranberry juices. No dairy products (milk, ice cream, cheese, butter). No carbonated beverages.
2. Starting at 1pm until 9 pm, drink 8 ounces or more of liquids every hour.
3. Liquid dinner at 5 pm. Drink entire bottle of Citrate of Magnesium (cold) at 5:30pm.
4. Take 4 Dulcolax (bisacodyl) tablets at 9:30 pm. Do not chew tablets. Swallow tablets whole, one at a time. Liquids only until bedtime.
5. Nothing by mouth after midnight except medications (with small amount of water).
6. On the day of the examination, insert one Dulcolax rectal suppository at 6 am. (You may not get much result from the suppository if you have already had plenty of stool passed with the previous measures, and that is okay).
7. Do NOT eat or drink anything on the morning of the exam (unless you need to take your AM medication or you are having blood drawn for lab testing, in which case you can drink water).

If you are having your test in the afternoon, it is okay to have a small liquid breakfast.