

### What is Sigmoidoscopy?

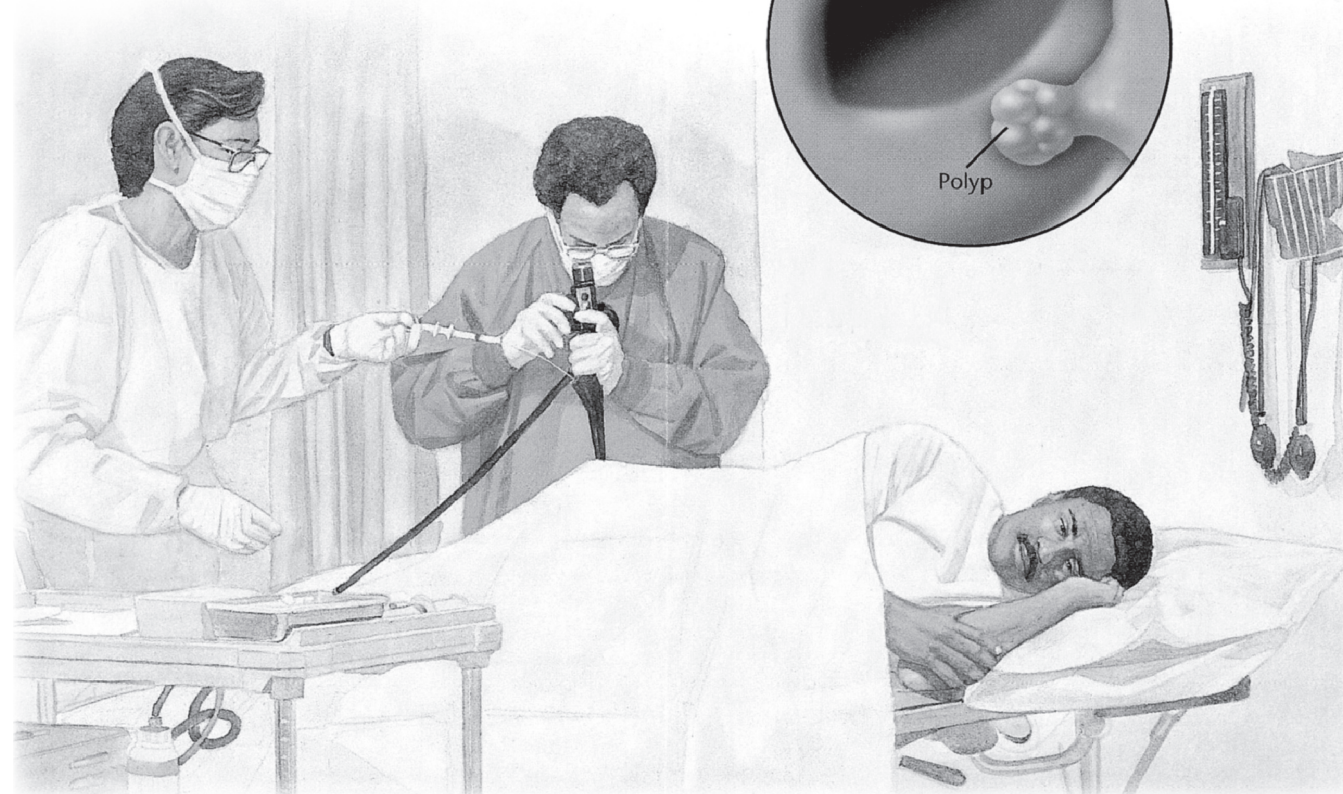
Sigmoidoscopy is a procedure used to view the lower colon. If you're age 50 or over, the American Cancer Society recommends having one every 3-5 years to screen for colon cancer. This test can also help find the source of abdominal pain, bleeding, and changes in bowel habits. It is done using a sigmoidoscope, a flexible tube with a viewing lens and light.

### Preparing for the Procedure

- Be sure to tell your doctor about any medications you take. Also tell your doctor about any health conditions you may have.
- Ask your doctor about the risks of the test. These include bleeding and bowel puncture.
- Your rectum and colon must be empty for the test, so be sure to follow the diet and prep instructions exactly. Otherwise the test may need to be rescheduled.

Through the scope the doctor can see the inside of the lower colon and locate problems such as polyps.

pass gas during the procedure.



### During the Test

Sigmoidoscopy is done in the doctor's office or in an endoscopy unit at a hospital. A nurse or technician may assist the doctor. You may wear a gown or a drape over your lower body. The procedure takes 5-20 minutes.

### Inserting the Scope

You are asked to lie on your left side. The doctor performs a digital rectal exam to check for anal and rectal problems. The rectum is lubricated and the scope inserted. You may have a feeling similar to needing to have a bowel movement. You may also feel pressure when air is pumped into the colon (to better view the area) or when the scope goes around bends in the colon. It's okay to pass gas during the procedure.

### Viewing the Lower Colon

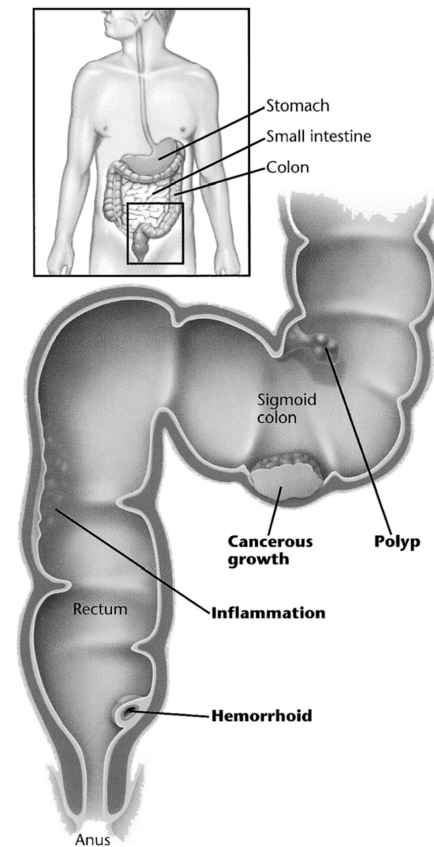
The lower colon is viewed while the scope is slowly pulled out. The doctor may take a small sample (biopsy) of any abnormal areas. Small polyps, if found, may be removed.

### The Lower Colon

The anus, rectum, and sigmoid colon form the lower part of the colon (large intestine). The colon removes fluid from digested food, leaving stool. The rectum stores stool until it passes out of the body through the anus.

### Problems in the Lower Colon

Some problems can occur in the lower colon. These include hemorrhoids (swollen blood vessels), inflammation, polyps (precancerous growths), and cancerous growths.



### After the Sigmoidoscopy

Usually you'll discuss the results with your doctor right away, unless you're having other tests. Try to pass all the gas right after the test. Otherwise you may have bloating and cramping. After the test you can go back to your normal eating and other activities. Be sure to call your doctor if you notice pain, fever, or excessive bleeding. Slight bleeding or spotting is normal.