Preparing for a Flexible Sigmoidoscopy
(an Examination of the Left Lower Part of Your Colon)
The day before your examination, your doctor wants you to take a medicine which will empty and clean your bowel. It is advisable to stay at home and not make any arrangements for that day as the medicine will give you diarrhoea. It is impossible to say how quickly this will occur as everyone is different. Stay close to the toilet all day.

Contact your GP, or the Endoscopy Unit on 01473 702352, before taking the bowel cleansing medication if you suffer from any of the conditions listed below:

- bowel obstruction, perforation or paralysis;
- active inflammatory bowel disease;
- enlarged colon;
- if you have had surgery and have a colostomy or ileostomy bag;
- difficulty swallowing;
- nausea or vomiting prior to taking the oral bowel preparation;
- congestive heart failure;
- severe kidney dysfunction; or
- stomach or ulcer problems.

If you take iron tablets, please stop taking them two weeks before your procedure.

If you take clopidogrel or warfarin tablets or have diabetes, please make sure that the staff in the Endoscopy Unit know this before your appointment. You may have already received special instructions because of this. If you have not, please phone the Unit on 01473 702352.
Dietary advice

It is essential that your bowel is empty on the day of your examination so that the doctor or specialist nurse can see the lining of the bowel. This means you are only allowed to eat certain foods and it is important that you follow the instructions overleaf carefully.

Three days before your appointment

Stop taking any constipating tablets such as codeine phosphate and loperamide. Continue to take any other regular medicines not mentioned above, including laxatives and pain relief medication as necessary.

Two days before your appointment

Try to remove all the fibre from your diet, by eating only the following:

- boiled or steamed white fish;
- boiled chicken (skin removed);
- eggs;
- cheese;
- white bread;
- butter or margarine;
- Rich Tea or plain biscuits;
- potatoes without the skins.

The day before your appointment

Please follow the instructions on how to take the laxative bowel preparation carefully. If you take bulk-forming laxatives, such as Fybogel, stop taking these on this day as they can reduce how well the bowel preparation works.

You should not eat any solid food for at least two hours before taking the bowel cleansing preparation. Do not eat any high fibre food, such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, rice, pulses, wholemeal bread, red meat or pink fish.

Fluid intake

Drink plenty of clear fluids, about two litres (8–10 glasses) per day. These can include:

- tap water;
- mineral water;
- tea and coffee (black or with coffee whitener);
- lemon, herbal or fruit tea;
- vegetable, beef or chicken Oxo;
- fizzy drinks;
- Bovril;
- Marmite;
- fruit juice (with no ‘bits’);
- squash.

but

- no milk; and
- no alcohol.

How to take the bowel preparation sachet

Two doses of bowel preparation should be taken 6–8 hours apart on the day before your hospital appointment.

On the day before your appointment, have a light breakfast and lunch (see dietary advice on page 4) and then eat nothing else until after your examination.

Mix the contents of one sachet in a cup (approximately 150 ml) of cold water. Stir for 2–3 minutes and then drink the solution.

First dose: One sachet at 8 am on the day before your appointment.

Second dose: One sachet at 4 pm on the day before your appointment.

It is essential that you take both sachets of bowel preparation.
Other tips on what to do during the treatment with bowel cleansing preparation

- Oral medication should not be taken within one hour of taking a bowel cleansing preparation as it may be flushed from the gut and not absorbed.
- Side effects can include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, bloating, headache, and soreness of the anus (bottom). This is not an exhaustive list of side effects.
- Women should be aware that this preparation may make the contraceptive pill unreliable.

The oral bowel cleansing preparation is supplied to you to clean and empty your bowel. You should expect to have diarrhoea as a result of taking this medicine. However, if you experience any changes in your symptoms or bowel habits in the time prior to taking your bowel cleansing preparation, please contact your GP or the Endoscopy Unit on 01473 702352.

Frequently asked questions

Can I take my normal medicines with the bowel preparation?
For advice on blood thinning medication, diabetic medication or iron tablets please see page 3 of this booklet.

It is fine to take your other medications but take them an hour before taking the bowel preparation. Be aware that, because of the diarrhoea, any medications you take may pass through your system more quickly than usual.

What can I eat while taking the bowel preparation?
If there is any stool left in the bowel, we cannot see the lining of the bowel properly. The low fibre diet on page 4 of this booklet allows the bowel preparation to work as well as possible. Although it may seem like a long time without food, most people find that drinking the preparation plus extra clear fluids means that they don't feel hungry.

If you are diabetic you will be given extra information on how to manage your diabetes while not eating normally. See page 3 of this booklet.

What can I mix with the bowel preparation to make it taste better?
See page 5 of this booklet. The bowel preparation can be mixed with light-coloured squash or clear apple juice. You could also try chilling it or drinking the liquid through a straw. Do not use red squash or juice as this can stain the bowel.

Can I drink on the day of my test?
If you are having a flexible sigmoidoscopy only, you can drink clear fluid right up to the appointment. If you are having a flexible sigmoidoscopy and gastroscopy you must not eat or drink anything for six hours before your appointment.

What should I bring with me for my appointment?
You can expect to be in the department for about two hours so bring a dressing gown and slippers. You may want to bring a book or something to keep you occupied while you are waiting.