Flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy are examinations of your large bowel. The tests are simple and take between 15 and 45 minutes. The total time from arrival to discharge may take between 3 and 4 hours. The tests involve passing a flexible tube with a tiny camera into your rectum (back passage) and examining the lining of your bowel wall. Small polyps can be removed during the procedure, this is known as a polypectomy.

A flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy can be performed without any pain relief or sedatives. You will be given the choice of having 2 injections, 1) to make you relax (sedative) and 2) to minimise any potential pain. These injections may make you feel drowsy for a short time afterwards. If you decide to have sedation you will need someone to collect you from the endoscopy unit about two hours after your procedure time. Alternatively we can assess if Entonox (gas and air) would be beneficial to help relieve any intermittent pain (see separate information sheet).

What are the benefits of having a flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy?
Your problem can be diagnosed quickly and accurately

Are there any risks involved in having a flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy?
There are very few risks involved:
- There is a small risk of infection.
- The procedure can very rarely cause the bowel to rupture. This is usually recognised immediately and requires admission to hospital where an operation is needed (1/1000). This may result in the formation of a stoma (bowel brought out onto tummy as a bag).
- There is a small risk of bleeding after a biopsy or polypectomy (removal of a polyp) but this nearly always stops by itself (1/100).
- The test may be incomplete.
- There is also a small chance of missing small abnormalities.
- Very unusually death may occur.

If you are worried about these risks please ask to talk to the endoscopist.

What bowel preparation do I take before the test?
Specific instructions will be given according to the type of bowel preparation you require.
Can I take my prescribed and over the counter medications?

- Continue with you medications as normal except: Iron, Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor, Prasugrel, Rivaroxaban, Apixaban, Dabigatran, Edoxaban, Acenocoumarol and Pheninione

- If you are taking any of the medications listed above, we will advise you when to stop taking them, please Telephone us on 01246 512197. It is useful to bring with you your latest INR blood test result.

- Stop taking Iron tablets 5 days before your test.

- Please bring a copy or list of your prescribed medication.

Insulin controlled diabetics should note that sweet drinks can be taken at any time, glucose sweets may also be taken freely. If you would like further advice please contact your diabetic liaison sister or your

For further advice you can contact the Endoscopy Unit on Tel: 01246 512197