



## SIGMOIDOSCOPY FACT SHEET

### **What is a Sigmoidoscopy Exam?**

A sigmoidoscopy exam should be part of a complete physical. It enables a physician to look inside the rectum and lower colon, or large intestine.

### **How is the exam performed?**

A sigmoidoscopy is a lighted tube about as big around as your finger. Your Digestive Disease Institute physician will lubricate the tube and gently insert it into your rectum while you lie on your side. You may be given an enema prior to the exam to clear the bowel. The exam may be performed in the doctor's office with little or no discomfort.

### **Are all Sigmoidoscopies the same?**

No. There are two different types of sigmoidoscopies. The rigid sigmoidoscope is a small plastic tube about 10 inches long. It allows your physician to examine the rectum and lower portion of the colon. A flexible sigmoidoscope is a longer, flexible device which allows your physician to see up to 24 inches of colon. Your physician will select the instrument that is appropriate for your examination.

### **Why is the Sigmoidoscopy exam recommended?**

Because the sigmoidoscopy exam allows your physician to see inside your rectum and colon, it is an effective means of diagnosing colorectal polyps, cancer, diverticular disease and inflammatory bowel disease. The sigmoidoscopy exam is also very useful in the evaluation of rectal bleeding.

In addition, should a polyp or tumor be found during the exam, your physician can insert a small device through the tube to collect a sample for laboratory evaluation. This procedure is called a biopsy. It is also possible to remove the polyp with a similar device inserted through the tube.

The American Cancer Society and your physician recommend a sigmoidoscopy exam be performed regularly to screen for colorectal polyps and cancer. People with a history of colorectal polyps or cancer in their family, or those experiencing symptoms of digestive problems, may need to see their physician more frequently.