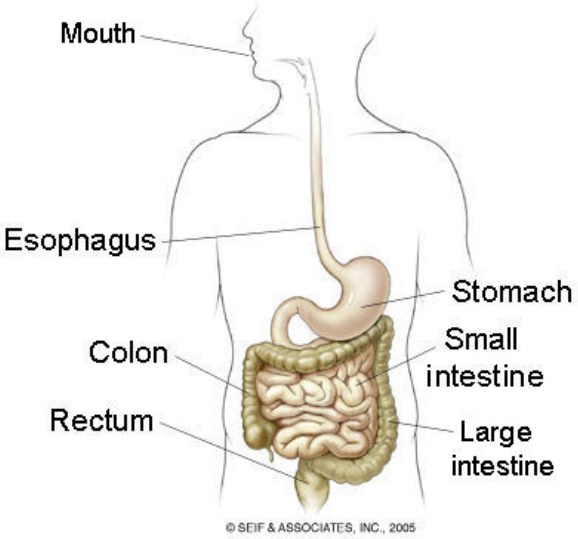
Lower GI Endoscopy

Lower GI endoscopy means using a flexible scope to examine the rectum and the colon. This exam is done to evaluate rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. This exam may also be needed to evaluate problems seen on x-ray, and to remove polyps and take biopsies. One of the following will be used to examine you:

- A sigmoidoscope is used to examine the rectum and lower colon.
- The longer colonoscope is used to examine the entire colon.



Screening for colon cancer is recommended at the age of 50. This is done to find polyps that may later become cancerous. Colon cancer is common. Colon cancer is highly curable if it is found early. It may begin in the colon as a polyp that remains benign for many years. If others in your family have had colon polyps or cancer, it is especially important for you to have an exam. There is a strong hereditary risk. Your provider will discuss screening options with you. This will involve colonoscopy (more common) or sigmoidoscopy (less common).

The best results from lower GI endoscopy require cleaning the bowel. Your provider will give you specific instructions on how to cleanse the bowel to prepare for the test. Sigmoidoscopy usually takes 10-15 minutes and colonoscopy 15-60 minutes. For either exam you lie on your side as the scope is inserted and slowly advanced under direct vision. Air is inflated into the colon to distend it and make inspection easier; this may cause mild discomfort.

Bloating from the air inflation usually lasts about an hour. If a biopsy specimen or polyp is removed, there may be some spotting of blood in your stool. If a biopsy specimen or polyp is removed, it will be 3-4 days to get the results of your exam. Call your doctor if you have any questions about your condition or exam. **Call right away if you have increasing pain, fever, uncontrolled bleeding, or other troubling symptoms.**

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