

Hemorrhoids/Fissures/Rectal Irritation

Hemorrhoids, or piles, is a common benign disease of the anus and rectum. Modern man's tendency to eat refined foods is one reason for its prevalence.

Essentially, hemorrhoids are dilated veins around the rectal opening. They may become swollen and painful and bleed periodically. They rarely bleed enough to cause significant blood loss. They have no tendency to form cancerous lesions. They are a chronic recurring problem that should be treated conservatively by medical means. However, if they are progressive or very troublesome, surgical removal by various methods must be used.

There are many causes of rectal pain and bleeding so the original diagnosis should be left to your doctor and periodic checkups may be necessary to make sure other unrelated problems do not arise. To control hemorrhoids and avoid their flare-up, we recommend the following:

- Develop regular bowel habits. Try to move your bowels at a regular time each day.
- Never strain while defecating.
- Keep bowel movements soft with natural stool softeners such as increased bran in diet, or Metamucil, Fibercon, Citrucel, fiber cookies, cereals or other natural products.
- Do not rub your anus clean after a movement. Pat it dry. Occasional use of Tucks Medicated Pads or witch hazel on the toilet paper may aid this.
- Do not hold bowel movements in.

If a flare-up of hemorrhoidal pain occurs or bleeding ensues, try these first steps:

- Warm water soaks in the bathtub two or three times a day for 15 to 20 minutes. This is very effective. Epsom salts may be added to the bath water.
- Use Tucks to pat dry your anus or witch hazel on the toilet paper.
- A lubricating and/or anti-inflammatory suppository may be helpful. Anusol Suppositories are an example.
- Pain medicines might be needed to prevent spasms.

Your physician should play a role in guiding these steps. When conservative therapies as outlined above fail, other procedures may need to be discussed. However, most problems respond to the above program.