

Hemorrhoids

What are hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are swollen veins near the anus or inside the rectum. The anus is the opening where the bowel movement passes out of the body. The rectum is the end of the intestine just inside the anus.

Hemorrhoids can happen in 2 places:

- inside the rectum (about 1 inch up)
- outside the anus.

If you have hemorrhoids inside the rectum, they don't hurt. But sometimes they cause a lot of bleeding. The veins inside can stretch and even fall down through the anus. Then the veins can be painful.

It is easy to see and feel the hemorrhoids outside the anus. The swollen veins may bleed if they get scratched or broken by straining, rubbing, or wiping.

What is the cause?

If there is too much pressure on the veins, you may get hemorrhoids. This can happen when you:

- Strain during bowel movements because you are constipated.
- Hold back or wait a long time before you have a bowel movement.
- Have diarrhea.
- Sit for a long time on the toilet.

You are more likely to get hemorrhoids when you:

- Are pregnant or give birth.
- Are overweight.
- Cough or sneeze a lot.
- Sit for a long time.

You may also get hemorrhoids when you:

- Have liver disease.
- Drink too much alcohol.

What are the symptoms?

You may:

- Itch or bleed from the anus.
- Feel a mild burning.
- Have swelling and pain during bowel movements.
- Feel painful lumps around the anus (the lumps may be as small as a pea or as big as a walnut).

How are they diagnosed?

Your health care provider will check your rectum and anus. He or she may use a special light to look inside the rectum.

How are they treated?

Here are things you can do that usually stop the hemorrhoids from bothering you:

- Eat foods high in fiber. Good sources of fiber are:
 - Fresh fruit.
 - Raw or cooked vegetables. Asparagus, cabbage, carrots, corn, and broccoli are especially high in fiber.
 - Whole-grain cereals with bran. Try shredded wheat or bran flakes.
- Drink lots of water (6 to 8 glasses a day).
- Sit in lukewarm water 2 or 3 times a day for 15 minutes.
- Put cold packs on the anus to relieve pain.
- Try creams or ointments.

Ask your health care provider what would be best for you.

You may need other kinds of treatment. If your hemorrhoids stick out from the inside of your rectum, you may need a procedure called hemorrhoid banding:

- Your health care provider may put a tight band around the enlarged vein.
- He or she will then cut the hemorrhoid open and take out the blood clot.
- The vein will heal. The hemorrhoid will fall off.

There are other ways to take away or shrink hemorrhoids. Your health care provider could:

- Freeze the hemorrhoid.
- Use electrical or laser heat.
- Use infrared light.
- Give a shot around the vein.

If you have really bad hemorrhoids, you may need surgery to remove the hemorrhoids.

How long will it take to get better?

Most of the time, hemorrhoids are not a big problem. They go away in a few days. In the worst cases, it may take a few weeks.

How can I take care of myself?

Always tell your health care provider if you bleed from the anus. Serious illnesses may also cause the bleeding. It's best to make sure it is not something more serious.

Here's what you can do to prevent hemorrhoids:

- Do not strain during bowel movements.
- Eat high-fiber food and drink plenty of water.
- Take a stool softener if your health provider recommends it.
- Don't use too many laxatives. Diarrhea can also cause hemorrhoids.
- Get enough exercise, which can help prevent constipation.

If you have hemorrhoids, here are some things to remember:

- Ask your health care provider what you should use to help with pain and itching.
- Wipe gently after a bowel movement. Wipe with soft, moist toilet paper, or moist toilet or baby wipes. If you need to, shower instead of wiping. Dry the anus gently.
- Don't lift heavy objects. This may put more pressure on the veins and make the hemorrhoids worse.

Published by McKesson Health Solutions LLC. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional. Developed by McKesson Health Solutions LLC. Copyright © 2003 McKesson Health Solutions LLC. Copyright © Clinical Reference Systems 2004 Copyright © 2004 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. www.mdconsult.com

Special Instructions:

