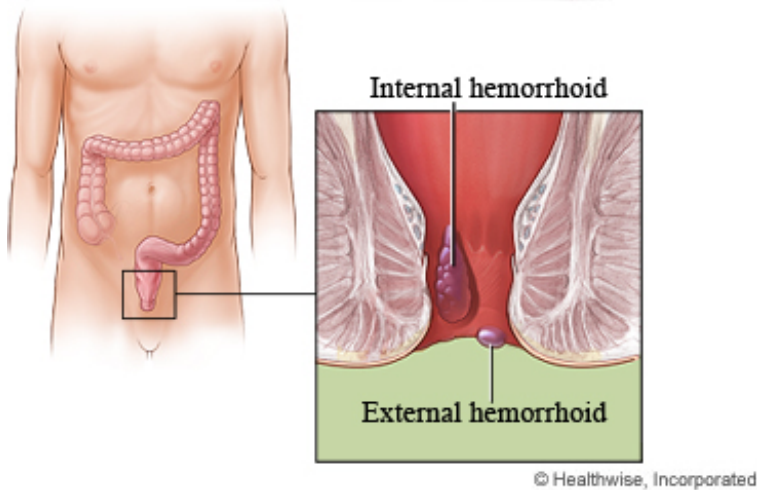


Hemorrhoids: Care Instructions



Overview

Hemorrhoids are swollen veins that develop in the anal canal. Bleeding during bowel movements, itching, and rectal pain are the most common symptoms. Hemorrhoids can be uncomfortable at times, but rarely are they a serious problem.

Most of the time, you can treat them with simple changes to your diet and bowel habits. These changes include eating more fiber and not straining to pass stools. Most hemorrhoids don't need surgery or other treatment unless they are very large and painful or bleed a lot.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Sit in a few inches of warm water (sitz bath) 3 times a day and after bowel movements. The warm water helps with pain and itching.
- Put ice on your anal area several times a day for 10 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. Follow this by placing a warm, wet towel on the area for another 10 to 20 minutes.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Keep the anal area clean, but be gentle. Use water and a fragrance-free soap, or use baby wipes or medicated pads such as Tucks.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose clothing to decrease moisture in the anal area.
- Eat more fiber. Include foods such as whole-grain breads and cereals, raw vegetables, raw and dried fruits, and beans.
- Drink plenty of fluids. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Use a stool softener that contains bran or psyllium. You can save money by buying bran or psyllium (available in bulk at most health food stores) and sprinkling it on foods or stirring it into fruit juice. Or you can use a product such as Metamucil or Hydrocil.

- Practice healthy bowel habits.
 - Go to the bathroom as soon as you have the urge.
 - Avoid straining to pass stools. Relax and give yourself time to let things happen naturally.
 - Do not hold your breath while passing stools.
 - Do not read while sitting on the toilet. Get off the toilet as soon as you have finished.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You pass maroon or very bloody stools.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have increased pain.
- You have increased bleeding.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms have not improved after 3 or 4 days.

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