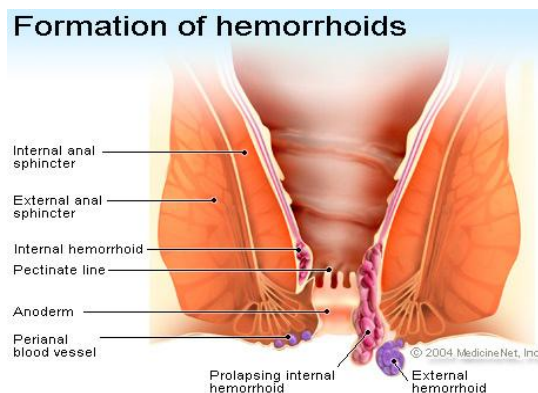


Nonsurgical Hemorrhoid Relief

What are Hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are enlarged veins located in the anus and lower part of the rectum. All hemorrhoids are the result of the descent and prolapse of 1 of 3 fibrovascular cushions in the anal canal. Straining from constipation; inadequate fiber intake; prolonged time with bowel movements; and conditions that increase intra-abdominal pressure, such as pregnancy, contribute to the formation of hemorrhoids. The most common symptom associated with hemorrhoids is painless rectal bleeding, although patients may also complain of itching, swelling, prolapse, discharge, or soiling. Severe anal pain is associated with a thrombosed or strangulated hemorrhoid.



Home Treatments

■ Warm Sitz Baths

Sitting in a few inches of warm water **3 times a day for 15-20 minutes** may help decrease the inflammation of the hemorrhoids. It is important to dry off the anal area completely after each Sitz bath to minimize irritation of the skin surrounding the anus. This can be done simply in a tub bath or with commercial pans that are made to fit on a toilet seat. This is the most effective intervention for anal discomfort.



■ Dietary Changes

Increased **fluid intake (water)** and **dietary fiber (roughage)** will decrease the potential for constipation and lessen the pressure on the rectum and anus during a bowel movement, minimizing further swelling, discomfort, and bleeding. Dietary fiber supplements may also help bulk up the stools.

■ Stool Softeners

Stool softeners may help but once hemorrhoids are present, but liquid stools may cause inflammation and infection of the anus. Your doctor is a good resources to discuss their use.

■ Activity Suggestions

Individuals with hemorrhoids should not sit for long periods of time and may benefit from sitting on an air or rubber donut available at most local pharmacies. Additionally, one should spend a minimal amount of time on the toilet and never take reading material into the bathroom.

Exercise is helpful in relieving constipation and in decreasing pressure on the hemorrhoidal veins. Individuals should be encouraged to **have a bowel movement as soon as possible after the urge arises**. Once that urge passes, stools can become constipated and straining with a bowel movement may occur.

■ Over-the-Counter Medications

Many creams, ointments, and suppositories are available for symptom relief and may be used for comfort. However, they do not "cure" hemorrhoids. Often they contain a numbing medication or a corticosteroid to decrease inflammation and swelling. Once the swelling and inflammation reside, the hemorrhoids will become less bothersome and may resolve completely if the above lifestyle modifications are made.

Why Not Surgery?

Surgery is a very good option for many patients with severe hemorrhoids that have been refractory to non-operative management. It is a surgery and therefore not without risks, including bleeding, infection, nonhealing wounds, scarring, or stenosis. Surgery in this area can also be quite painful during the healing period. Most patients will respond well to the nonsurgical treatments listed above, and never require an operation.