



Hemorrhoids

Patient Education Series

What are hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are enlarged veins in the area around the anus. Sometimes called “piles,” hemorrhoids may occur outside the anus and be visible (external hemorrhoids) or may occur inside the rectum (internal hemorrhoids). Sometimes, an internal hemorrhoid may protrude through the rectal opening.

Hemorrhoids can become inflamed and swollen or can develop a localized blood clot. The result is itching, pain or bleeding. These flare-ups can be caused by constipation, straining to have a bowel movement, heavy lifting or pregnancy.

In most cases inflammation, swelling or blood clots resolve spontaneously in a few days. The following suggestions will ease your discomfort and speed recovery. You'll also find guidelines for preventing hemorrhoidal flare-up.

How do I relieve discomfort?

- ◆ Avoid straining during a bowel movement. To achieve a soft stool that is easy to pass, increase the amount of fiber in your diet and drink plenty of liquids. See the list of foods on the back side of this handout. Whole-grain cereals and bran are the richest sources of fiber, but a variety of other foods also contain it. In addition, your medical provider may prescribe a bulk-type laxative to take once or twice a day until your discomfort is gone. A bulk laxative draws water into the stool and forms a thick solution to soften and give volume to the stool. Important: neither a diet with high-fiber content nor a bulk laxative will produce a soft, bulky stool unless you drink plenty of fluids – preferably 2 quarts (8 glasses) a day.
- ◆ Take frequent sitz baths. Soaking for 10 to 15 minutes in a hot bath – about 110 degrees Fahrenheit 2 to 3 times a day provides some relief of pain and itching.
- ◆ Apply compresses soaked in witch hazel. Many people find witch hazel soothing.
- ◆ Avoid commercial products such as Preparation H or Anusol, because they are of no additional benefit beyond being a lubricant for easier passing of stool.

- ◆ Avoid any remedy with the suffix “-caine” as these may irritate the anal area. Hydrocortisone 1% cream can help reduce the local inflammation.
- ◆ Avoid sitting or standing for long periods. Lie down frequently until the pain, itching and/or bleeding is gone.

How do I prevent future discomfort?

- ◆ Eat at regular hours and establish a regular time for bowel movements. Go to the toilet when you have the urge, never delay.
- ◆ Avoid prolonging time spent on the toilet. Sitting on the toilet for long periods, or straining to produce a stool can aggravate hemorrhoids or produce fissures (cracks in the skin) surrounding the anus.
- ◆ Clean the anal area after each bowel movement by washing with a warm, soapy cloth or cotton, and then rinsing the area. Avoid using toilet paper. Tucks pads are gentle and a convenient method for wiping.
- ◆ Eat a diet high in fiber content to achieve soft, bulky stools that do not irritate the rectum or necessitate straining. The list of foods will help you modify your present diet as necessary. Remember to drink plenty of fluids.
- ◆ Avoid heavy lifting.
- ◆ Exercise daily to help relieve some of the pressure on the hemorrhoidal veins caused by prolonged standing or sitting.
- ◆ Schedule 2 to 3 periods of relaxation daily, lying down for 5 to 10 minutes.

(continued...)

Foods to include on a high-fiber diet:

Vegetables

Asparagus
Beans and lentils, all varieties
 Beets
 Broccoli
 Brussel sprouts
 Cabbage
 Carrots*
 Cauliflower*
 Celery*
 Corn
 Cucumber, with skin
 Eggplant
 Endive
 Greens, all varieties
 Kohlrabi
 Lettuce
 Mushrooms
 Okra
 Onions
 Parsnips
 Peas, all varieties
 Peppers*
 Potatoes, all varieties with skin
 Radishes
 Rhubarb
 Sauerkraut
 Spinach*
 Squash
 Tomatoes*
 Turnips
 Watercress
(*eat raw or undercooked)

Bread

Buckwheat bread
 Corn bread made with coarse ground meal
 Cracked wheat bread
 100% Whole wheat
 Rye bread

Cereal

All high bran cereals
 Kashi Good Friends
 Fiber One
 Oat Bran (2 Tbsp daily)
 Brown rice
 Puffed wheat
 Oatmeal
 Shredded wheat
 Whole-grain cereals
 Ground flaxseed

Protein

Crunchy peanut butter
 Nuts
 Pumpkin seeds
 Sunflower seeds
 Include for balance, no fiber:
 Bacon, Ham
 Beef
 Chicken
 Eggs
 Fish
 Lamb
 Pork
 Turkey
 Veal

Soups

Hearty varieties, such as vegetable, minestrone, chowder, bean, chili

Fruit

Apples*
 Apricots*
 Bananas
 Berries
 Cantaloupe
 Cherries
 Dried fruits
 Grapefruit
 Oranges
 Peaches*
 Pears*
 Pineapple
 Plums*
 Strawberries

(*eat unpeeled)

Desserts

Fruits, (fresh, frozen, canned)
 Fruit whips
 Ices and sherbets

Beverages

Fruit juices with pulp
 Include for balance, no fiber:
 Milk (3 to 4 cups)
 Water

Comparative fiber content of some common foods

	g fiber/100gm	g fiber/ half cup		g fiber/100gm	g fiber/ half cup
Bran flakes (100% bran)	7.8	2.2	Peanuts, with skins	2.7	2.7
Bran flakes (40% bran)	3.6	1.0	Almonds, with skins	2.6	2.2
Raisin Bran	3.0	0.8	Pecans	2.3	1.3
Puffed Wheat	2.0	0.6	Peanut Butter (2 Tbsp)	1.9	0.7
Shredded Wheat	2.3	0.6	Whole grain bread (1 pc)	0.9	0.4
Sunflower seeds, kernels	3.8	1.9	Bran muffin	1.8	0.7
Sesame seeds	6.3	1.8	Fresh fruit with skin	1.5	1.5
Pumpkin seeds, kernels	1.9	0.5	Fresh fruit without skin	1.0	1.0
English Walnuts	2.1	1.2	Raw Vegetables	1.1	1.1