



HEMORRHOIDS FACT SHEET

What are Hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are a normal part of the human anatomy. Everybody has hemorrhoids, which are small blood vessels in and around the anus. There are two types of hemorrhoids; external hemorrhoids are just outside the anal opening, and internal hemorrhoids are just inside the anal opening.

What are the symptoms of Hemorrhoids?

People with symptoms from external hemorrhoids may notice a tender lump on the edge of the anus and rectal bleeding. External hemorrhoids may be quite painful as well. They develop when blood vessels break and clots form around the anus. External hemorrhoids will often leak mucous, leading to anal itching, burning pain, and soiling issues.

The only sign you may notice from internal hemorrhoids is painless bright red blood on the toilet paper or in the toilet bowl. Internal hemorrhoids may also stretch and even slide down (prolapse) through the anus to outside the body. When this happens, the hemorrhoids may become irritated and painful.

What causes Hemorrhoids?

The exact cause of hemorrhoids is unknown; however, contributing factors include pressure on the rectal veins due to our upright posture, aging, chronic constipation or diarrhea, pregnancy and delivery, heredity, faulty bowel functions due to overuse of laxatives or enemas, spending long periods of time sitting on the toilet, and straining during bowel movements.

How are Hemorrhoids treated?

Whenever you experience bleeding from the anus, you should see your doctor to determine the cause of the bleeding. You should not assume that the bleeding is caused by the hemorrhoid; bleeding may be a sign of a more serious problem such as colorectal cancer, polyps, or diverticular disease.

A high fiber diet is often recommended for patients with symptomatic hemorrhoids. Dietary fiber helps soften the stool and normalize the time the waste material takes to pass through the colon.

Foods high in fiber include bran, whole grains, cereals, raw fruit and vegetables, cooked or dried fruit, and cooked vegetables.

Laxatives should be avoided, unless closely supervised by a physician, as your colon can become dependent on them.

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HEMORRHOIDS (continued)

Developing good bathroom habits also is recommended. Empty your bowel soon after you feel the urge, avoid straining, and sit on the toilet only as long as necessary.

Treatment options for hemorrhoids include: dietary changes, laser surgery, minor office surgery, rubber banding, or possible outpatient or inpatient hospital surgery. Your doctor will discuss the best possible way to treat your hemorrhoids.

Can Hemorrhoids lead to a more serious problem?

Hemorrhoids do not lead to more serious problems like cancer. However, you should never assume that bleeding from the anus is “only a hemorrhoid”. One sign of colorectal cancer and polyps is bleeding, so ALL rectal bleeding should be evaluated by your doctor. The most successful way to treat colorectal cancer is through early diagnosis. Do not rely on over-the-counter medications or other self-treatments.