

Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are veins in or outside of the anus that may become dilated or swollen.

Hemorrhoids are common. They are not likely to be a serious health problem. Most people have some bleeding from them once in awhile.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Bright red blood on or in the stool, on toilet paper, or in the toilet
- Anal or rectal tenderness. Anal itching.
- Uncomfortable, painful bowel movements, especially with straining
- A lump can be felt at the anus.
- Mucus passes from the anus.

CAUSES

Hemorrhoids are usually caused by repeated pressure in the rectal or anal veins. Often this is due to repeated straining to pass stool.

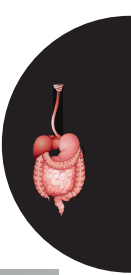
The risk for getting hemorrhoids increases with:

- Prolonged sitting on the toilet and straining to have a bowel movement
- Constipation
- A low dietary fiber intake
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Frequently lifting heavy objects

TREATMENT

Don't assume that rectal bleeding is "just hemorrhoids." See your doctor to find out the cause. If symptoms of hemorrhoids are not relieved with self-care or with time, medical care may be needed. This includes:

- Laser heat or infrared light
- Rubber band ligation. A rubber band is placed around the base of the hemorrhoid inside the rectum. The band cuts off blood flow to the hemorrhoid.
- Surgery
- Cryosurgery. This freezes the affected tissue.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have severe rectal bleeding that is nonstop or are you weak or dizzy because of it?

NO

YES ►

GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE



Do you have any of these problems?

- Rectal bleeding occurs with or without bowel movements and you don't know why.
- A hard lump is felt where a hemorrhoid used to be.
- Rectal pain is severe or lasts longer than a few days.
- The bleeding from a hemorrhoid lasts longer than 2 weeks despite using self-care.

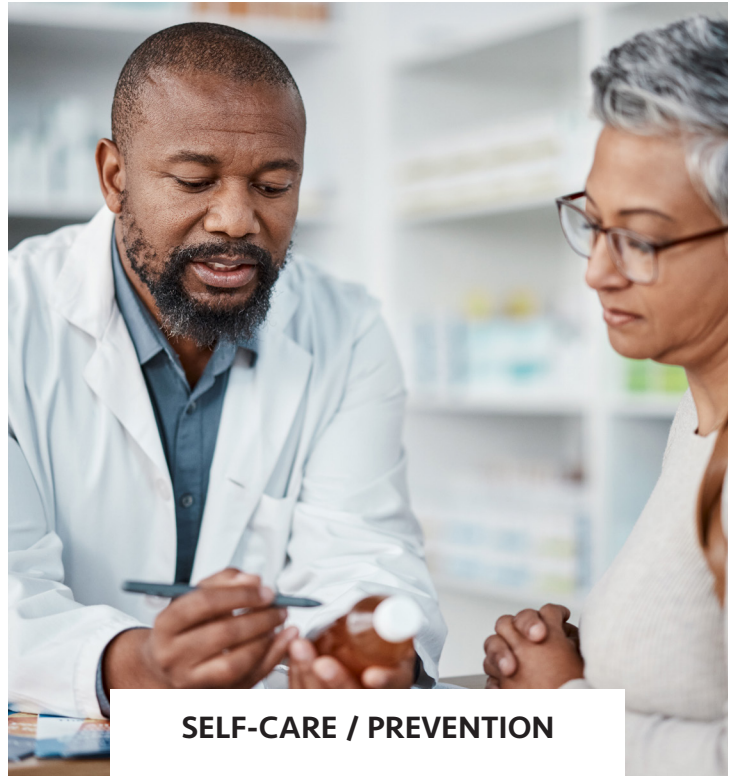
NO

YES ►

SEE DOCTOR



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

- Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of fluid per day.
- Eat foods with good sources of dietary fiber, such as bran, whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fruits.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Pass stool as soon as you feel the urge. If you wait and the urge goes away, your stool could become dry and hard. This makes it harder to pass.
- Don't sit on the toilet for long periods of time.
- Don't strain to pass stool.
- Don't hold your breath when trying to pass stool.
- Keep the anal area clean. Use moist towelettes or wet (not dry) toilet paper after you pass stool.
- Get regular exercise.
- Don't sit too much. This can restrict blood flow around the anal area. Don't sit too long on the toilet. Don't read while on the toilet.
- For itching or pain, put a cold compress on the anus for 10 minutes at a time. Do this up to 4 times a day.
- Take warm baths or use a sitz bath with hot water. A sitz bath is a basin that fits over the toilet. Get one at a medical supply or drug store.
- Check with your doctor about using over-the-counter products, such as:
 - Stool softeners
 - Zinc oxide or anesthetic (numbing) products, such as Preparation H
 - Medicated wipes, such as Tucks
 - Suppositories