

American College of Gastroenterology

Digestive Disease Specialists Committed to Quality in Patient Care

Common Gastrointestinal Problems

A Consumer Health Guide

Common GI Problems in Women: Hemorrhoids

What are hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are veins in the anal canal that can become swollen or stretched. Just like varicose veins in the lower legs, hemorrhoids often cause no problems.

What are the different types of hemorrhoids?

There are two types of hemorrhoids: *external* and *internal*.

External hemorrhoids: are swollen veins that can be seen and often felt under the skin outside the anal canal. Usually they look like a small bulge and are the same color as the skin.

Internal hemorrhoids: are swollen veins that arise from inside the rectum. When internal hemorrhoids become large, they may prolapse (protrude out) through the anal canal. The most common sign of hemorrhoids is bright red blood on the toilet paper or drops of blood into the toilet bowl. A thrombosed hemorrhoid contains a blood clot and may cause painful burning, pressure, or even an intense urge to scratch the area.

How do hemorrhoids develop?

Hemorrhoids are very common. About half the American population have hemorrhoids by the age of 50 years. Hemorrhoids develop due to increased pressure often caused by straining to have a bowel movement. Hemorrhoids frequently develop in women during pregnancy when the developing fetus causes increased pressure on the rectal area. Chronic constipation, diarrhea, hereditary factors, and aging may also lead to hemorrhoids.

How are hemorrhoids diagnosed?

As with all conditions involving the anal canal or rectum, the diagnosis is made by examining the anus visually and by performing a digital rectal examination (with a gloved finger.) Following this, a lighted instrument is inserted into

the canal so that the interior of the rectum may be visualized. This lighted tube may be an *anoscope* (a short tube which can examine the last few inches of the rectum) or a *sigmoidoscope* (a longer flexible tube that can also examine the lower part of the large intestine).

How are hemorrhoids medically treated?

Eliminate constipation: Bowel movements should be soft and should pass without need to strain. Constipation is usually caused by insufficient bulk in the bowel movement. Increasing water intake, dietary fiber (see table, over) and exercise are often effective remedies.

Creams and suppositories: Preparation-H® or Anusol®.

Sitz baths: Sit in a tub of warm water several times a day, then gently blot the anal area dry.

Gentle cleaning after a bowel movement: For instance, cotton balls soaked in witch hazel or a moist wash cloth or moist towelettes.

Things to avoid: irritating soaps and spicy foods/coffee.

Endoscopic & Surgical Treatment for Hemorrhoids

When hemorrhoids bleed excessively or are very painful they can be treated with surgery.

Banding: a rubber band is placed around the hemorrhoid and causes strangulation followed by scarring.

Sclerotherapy: injection of a chemical solution into the hemorrhoid causing them to shrink.

Infrared coagulation: a special device used to destroy the internal hemorrhoid.

Hemorrhoidectomy: surgical removal of hemorrhoid veins.

The first three are office procedures, while hemorrhoidectomy generally requires hospitalization.

For More Information about Digestive Health and GI Conditions
Call the American College of Gastroenterology Hotline at 1-800-978-7666
or visit our Website at <http://www.acg.gi.org>

What Everyone Should Know About Hemorrhoids

Sources of Dietary Fiber

<u>Sources of Fiber</u>	<u>Serving</u>	<u>Gm/srvg</u>
<i>Vegetables & Beans</i>		
Green beans	½ cup	2
Kidney beans	½ cup	5
Broccoli	½ cup	2.5
Brussel sprouts	½ cup	3.5
Carrots	½ cup	2.5
Corn	½ cup	3.0
Green peas	½ cup	3.5
Lettuce	½ cup	0.5
Potato (with skin)	½ cup	2.0
<i>Fruits</i>		
Apple	medium	2.5
Banana	1	2.0
Blackberries	1 cup	2.0
Cantaloupe	1 wedge	1.0
Dry Figs	3.5 ounces	18
Grape fruit	medium	3.5
Grapes	1 cup	1
Orange	1 medium	3
Pear	1 medium	4.5
Prunes	1 cup	13.5
Raspberries	1 cup	6.0
Strawberries	1 cup	3.5

<u>Sources of Fiber</u>	<u>Serving</u>	<u>Gm/srvg</u>
<i>Grain Products</i>		
Bread, white	1 slice	0.5
Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	2.0
Kellogg's All-Bran®	1 ounce	9-14
General Mills Fiber®	1 ounce	12
Kellogg's Bran Flakes®	1 ounce	4.0
Cereal, corn flakes®	1 ounce	0.5
Cereal, oat bran	1 ounce	4.0
Shredded wheat	1 ounce	2.5
Crackers, Graham®	4 squares	1.0
Crackers, Saltine®	10 regular	1.0
Rice, brown	½ cup	5.0
Rice, white	½ cup	1.5
Spaghetti	2 ounces	2.5
<i>Fiber Supplements</i>		
Metamucil®	1 tsp.	3.4
PerDiem®	1 tsp.	4.0
Konsyl®	1 tsp	6.0

*The goal is 30-35 gm of fiber per day. The average American diet contains only 10-20 gms.

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