

ANAL FISSURE



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A laceration, tear, or crack in the lining of the anus. It affects all age groups, including infants.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sharp pain with passage of a hard or bulky stool. The pain may last up to an hour and returns with the next bowel movement.
- Pain when sitting on a hard surface.
- Streaks of blood on the toilet paper, underwear or diaper.
- Itching around the rectum.
- Children may refuse to have a bowel movement.

CAUSES

The exact cause is unknown, but the symptoms usually occur after the stretching of the anus from a large, hard stool.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Constipation.
- Multiple pregnancies.
- Leukemia.
- Crohn's disease.
- Immunodeficiency disorders.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid constipation by:
 - Drinking at least 8 glasses of water daily.
 - Eating a diet high in fiber.
 - Using stool softeners or other laxatives, if needed.
- Don't strain at stool.
- Avoid anal intercourse.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most adults recover in 4 to 6 weeks with treatment, making surgery unnecessary. Most infants and young children recover after the stool is softened.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Permanent scarring that prevents normal bowel movements.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Examination of the anus and rectum with an anoscope or sigmoidoscope to rule out other causes of anal or rectal bleeding.
- Gently clean the anus with soap and water after each bowel movement.
- To relieve muscle spasms and pain around the anus, apply a warm towel to the area.
- Sitz baths also relieve pain. Use 8 inches of warm water in the bathtub, 2 or 3 times a day for 10 to 20 minutes.
- Surgery may be necessary, if conservative treatment is not successful, to remove the fissure or to alter the muscle that contracts and prevents normal healing.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor pain, use non-prescription drugs, such as acetaminophen or topical anesthetics.
- Zinc oxide ointment or petroleum jelly applied to the anal opening may help prevent the burning sensation.
- Bulk stool softeners will help to avoid the pain occurring with bowel movements.
- Lidocaine ointment may be recommended.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions. Physical activity reduces the likelihood of constipation.

DIET

Encourage a high-fiber diet and extra fluids to prevent constipation.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or your child has symptoms of an anal fissure, especially pain that persists despite treatment.