



Rectal Problems

Causes

For Anal / Rectal Pain and/or Bleeding

- Constipation. Straining to pass stool. Hemorrhoids.
- Anal fissures. These are splits or tears in the skin around the anus.
- Polyps or small growths.
- Injury due to anal intercourse or the insertion of a foreign object.
- Blockage in the intestines.
- Colon or rectal cancer.

For Anal / Rectal Itching

- Dry skin. Products that irritate or cause a skin allergy in the anal area. Examples are over-the-counter anesthetic ointments that end in “caine,” such as benzocaine.
- **Hemorrhoids.** (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Psoriasis.** This is a chronic skin disease. With this, itchy, scaly red patches form on a part of the body.
- **Pinworms.** These are intestinal parasites. They usually affect children. The anal itching is at night and can be painful.
- A fungal infection.

Often there is no clear cause. Persons with diabetes and liver disease are more prone to rectal itching.

Treatment

Treatment for rectal problems depends on the cause. Any sign of rectal bleeding should be evaluated by a doctor. This includes blood on toilet paper. Colon cancer should be checked for, despite the person’s age or family history of this disease.

The rectum is the lowest part of the large bowel (colon). The opening of the rectum is the anus. Stool are passed from the anus.

Signs & Symptoms

- Rectal pain.
- Rectal bleeding.
- Anal itching.
- Redness, swelling, or a rash in the rectal area.



Rectal Problems, Continued

Questions to Ask

Do you have any of these problems?

- Bright red blood in the stools (not just on toilet paper) with dizziness, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, and/or severe abdominal pain, cramps, and swelling.
- Rectal bleeding is heavy or dark maroon or black in color.
- Rape or sexual abuse has occurred.
- A foreign object is not able to be removed from the rectum.



NO

Does rectal bleeding occur with any of these conditions?

- Sudden onset of severe and constant pain and a purple-colored hemorrhoid that bleeds easily.
- Bright red blood after an injury, intercourse, or having something put up the rectum.
- Between bowel movements.
- After taking a new medicine or returning from another country.



NO

Does rectal pain occur with any of these problems?

- The pain is severe or lasts longer than a few days.
- Anal spasms occur after passing stool.
- Diarrhea or mucus discharge.
- Swelling or itching in the anal area.



NO

Are any of these problems present, especially in a child?

- Small ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) white worms in the stools or around the anal area.
- Pain and itching at night.
- Acting cranky. Restless sleep.



NO

Do rectal pain and/or itching still bother you after using self-care?



NO



Self-Care / Prevention

For Anal / Rectal Bleeding

- Don't lift heavy things.
- Stop taking anti-inflammatory medicines and/or aspirin (unless prescribed and monitored by your doctor).
- Don't strain to pass stool.

For Anal / Rectal Itching

- Practice good hygiene. Clean the rectal area daily.
- Use an over-the-counter ointment, such as one with zinc oxide or one for hemorrhoids, such as Preparation H. Follow package directions.
- Wear clothes and undergarments that fit loosely.
- Take a warm bath or sitz bath. A sitz bath is a shallow, warm water bath. You can get a sitz bath device from a medical supply company and some drug stores. Then dry the rectal area well. Use talcum powder, as needed.

Flowchart continued in next column



Limiting these items may help with anal / rectal itching:

- Caffeine.
- Colas.
- Citrus fruits.
- Chocolate.
- Alcohol.
- Spicy foods.

Rectal Problems, Continued

- Take warm tub baths.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- If you are diabetic, keep blood sugar under control.
- For pinworms:
 - Check for pinworms in this way: In a dark room, a few hours after bedtime, shine a flashlight on the anus. Pinworms, if present, will go back into the anus when the flashlight is shined on them.
 - Wash the hands often.
 - Keep fingernails closely trimmed.
 - Try to get your child to not suck his thumb and not bite his nails.
 - Wash underwear and bed linen in hot soapy water.
 - If medication for pinworms is prescribed, use it as directed.

For Rectal Pain

- Take warm baths.
- Use a warm water sitz bath for 15 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day.
- Put towels soaked in warm water on the anal area. Or, apply a cold compress to the painful area, if this helps with the pain.
- Follow measures to prevent **constipation**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- Don't strain to pass stool.
- Keep the rectal area clean.
- Use soft, plain, unscented, two-ply toilet paper. Take your own toilet paper to work or other places that may use harsh paper. Use wet, not dry, toilet paper, if that helps.
- Use an over-the-counter wipe, such as Tucks, after using toilet paper.
- Don't sit for long periods of time. When you do sit, raise your legs, as often as you can.
- If needed, take an over-the-counter medicine for pain as directed.



You can buy a sitz bath from a medical supply or drug store.



Get more information from:

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www.HealthyLearn.com