

AGA Patient Education Section

Hemorrhoids

Each of us has veins around the anus that stretch under pressure. Some of the veins are inside the rectum (internal) and others are under the skin around the anus (external). When the veins become swollen, they are called hemorrhoids.

Swelling can be caused by:

- Straining to move your bowels.
- Sitting too long on the toilet.
- Pregnancy.
- Obesity.

Hemorrhoids are very common in people older than age 50.

Symptoms

Common symptoms often are bleeding (bright red blood) and itching around the anus.

Internal hemorrhoid symptoms are:

- Painless rectal bleeding.
- Bright red blood in stool, on toilet paper, or in the toilet bowl.

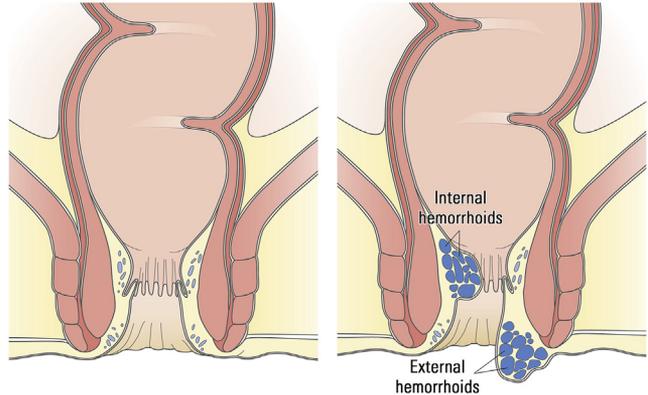
External hemorrhoid symptoms are:

- Pain and discomfort around the anus.
- Painful swelling or a hard lump around the anus.

Treatment

Hemorrhoids are uncomfortable, but not often a sign of something serious. Hemorrhoids can be treated with at-home or over-the-counter remedies.

- Add more fiber to your diet by eating more fresh fruits, leafy vegetables, and whole-grain breads.
- Try a fiber supplement to soften the stool (talk to your doctor first to see if this is a good choice for you).



- Practice good hygiene, like cleaning well after you have a bowel movement. Use soft, moist toilet paper and avoid too much wiping.

If your hemorrhoids do not go away, talk to your doctor. A gastroenterologist may have other ways to remove or shrink hemorrhoids.

Prevention

- Pass your bowel movements as soon as you feel the urge.
- Try not to strain to get the stool out.
- Be active when you can. Moving around and exercising can help move stool through your body.
- Eat fiber and drink plenty of fluids (mostly water), which help make stools softer and easier to pass.

For more information on hemorrhoids, talk to your doctor and visit www.gastro.org/patient-care/conditions-diseases/hemorrhoids.