



Haemorrhoids

WHAT ARE HAEMORRHOIDS?

Often described as "varicose veins of the anus and rectum", haemorrhoids are enlarged, bulging blood vessels in and about the anus and lower rectum. There are two types of haemorrhoids: external and internal, which refer to their location.

External (outside) haemorrhoids develop near the anus and are covered by very sensitive skin. If a blood clot develops in one of them, a painful swelling may occur. The external haemorrhoid feels like a hard, sensitive lump. It bleeds only if it ruptures.

Internal (inside) haemorrhoids develop within the anus beneath the lining. Painless bleeding and protrusion during bowel movements are the most common symptom. However, an internal haemorrhoid can cause severe pain if it is completely "prolapsed" - protrudes from the anal opening and cannot be pushed back inside.

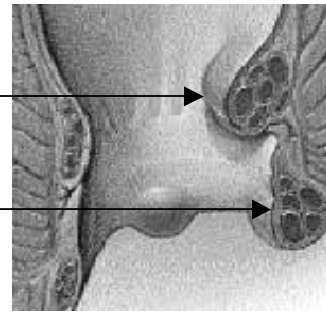
WHAT CAUSES HAEMORRHOIDS?

An exact cause is unknown

- Aging
- Chronic constipation or diarrhoea
- Pregnancy
- Heredity
- Faulty bowel function
- Straining during bowel movements
- Spending long periods of time (e.g., reading) on the toilet

Internal
Haemorrhoid

External
Haemorrhoid



Whatever the cause, the tissues supporting the veins stretch. As a result, the veins dilate; their walls become thin and bleed. If the stretching and pressure continue, the weakened veins protrude.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

If you notice any of the following, you could have haemorrhoids:

- Protrusion during bowel movements
- Anal pain or lump
- Itching in the anal area
- Bleeding during bowel movements

DO HAEMORRHOIDS LEAD TO CANCER?

No. There is no relationship between haemorrhoids and cancer. However, the symptoms of haemorrhoids, particularly bleeding, are **similar to those of colorectal cancer** and other diseases of the bowel

HOW ARE HAEMORRHOIDS TREATED?

Mild symptoms can be relieved frequently by

- Increasing the amount of fluid and fibre (e.g., fruits, vegetables, breads and cereals)
- Avoid excessive straining reduces the pressure on haemorrhoids and helps them from protruding.
- Sitting in plain warm water for about 10 minutes - can also provide some relief.
- **Proctosedyl** ointment and suppositories used together twice daily for 7-10 days

Severe haemorrhoids may require special treatment, much of which can be performed as an outpatient

- **Ligation** - the rubber band treatment - cutting off its blood supply.
- **Injection** and Coagulation can also be used on bleeding haemorrhoids that do not protrude.
- **Haemorrhoidectomy** - surgery to remove the haemorrhoids. It is necessary when (1) clots repeatedly form in external haemorrhoids; (2) ligation fails to treat internal haemorrhoids; (3) the protruding haemorrhoid cannot be reduced; or (4) there is persistent bleeding. A hemorrhoidectomy removes excessive tissue that causes the bleeding and protrusion.