



RECTAL BLEEDING

Bright red, burgundy or black-colored blood in the stool

CAUSES

ANAL FISSURE

In an anal fissure, skin lining the anal canal is torn due to constipation or forceful bowel movement. This causes pain with every bowel movement as well as rectal bleeding.

Non-invasive treatments are available for those with anal fissures. It should heal in several weeks to a few months. If not, surgery may be required.

Symptoms:

- Pain during bowel movements
- Rectal bleeding

DO:

- Take sitz baths every day - sit in a bathtub filled with enough warm water to cover the anal area for 10 to 20 minutes.
- Stool softeners, whether medication or fiber-rich foods, and suppositories help heal the anal fissure.

DON'T:

- Don't be afraid to tell your doctor you are experiencing rectal bleeding. The doctor can help you find the cause.

BISMUTH-CONTAINING MEDICATIONS AND SUBSTANCES

Iron supplements and some anti-diarrhea medicines cause stool to appear a very dark shade or even black. Some red foods such as beets can also cause stools to appear red. This is not a serious condition and is different from actual blood in the feces.

HEMORRHOIDS

Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the area of the anus. Bright-red blood is usually observed after bowel movements. Dietary changes are often beneficial to those with hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids can disappear on their own but when severe pain and bleeding are experienced, consultation with a medical professional is necessary.

Symptoms:

- Rectal bleeding after bowel movements
- Soft lumps around the anus
- Mucus discharge from the anus, in some
- Anal itch, in some

DO:

- Drink plenty of liquids and eat fiber-rich foods.
- If pregnant, consult a physician before applying creams and ointments on the anal area.
- Take sitz baths daily – sit in a bathtub filled with enough warm water to cover the anal area for 10 to 20 minutes.

DON'T:

- Don't eat spicy foods since these may aggravate hemorrhoids.

DIARRHEA

See page 28.

OTHER CAUSES

Other causes of rectal bleeding include diverticulitis, certain medications, polyps and ulcers.