



RECTAL PAIN OR ANAL ITCH

Pain or itching in the rectal or anal area

CAUSES

ANAL FISSURE

See page 83.

HEMORRHOIDS

See page 83.

FUNGAL INFECTION

Fungal infections such as yeast may cause anal itching. This condition is usually communicable when there is direct contact with other people such as during sexual intercourse.

Symptoms:

- A persistent itching in the anal area

DO:

- Apply over-the-counter anti-fungal creams on the affected area.
- For women, use an antiseptic vaginal wash several times a week or as directed by a doctor.
- Practice proper hygiene.

DON'T:

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

MUSCLE SPASM OR PROCTALGIA FUGAX

Though the Latin phrase *Proctalgia fugax* means "fleeting rectal pain," muscle spasms are not always fleeting. Attacks of muscle spasm may last up to an hour of severe pain and is common among females aged 45 years or younger.

Proctalgia fugax are caused by intense muscle spasms of the area surrounding the rectum, and though painful, is not serious and normally goes away on its own. Treatment for this condition is still unknown.

PERIRECTAL ABSCESS

A perirectal abscess is an infection in the rectal area which causes build-up of pus under the skin around the anus. Glands that secrete mucus may become blocked causing pus to form in that area. Those at high risk are diabetics and pregnant women. If untreated, the infection may induce other painful symptoms.

Symptoms:

- Pain before and during bowel movements
- Fever may sometimes develop
- *Erythema*, or the abnormal redness of the skin in the anal area due to congestion
- Discharge from pus

DO:

- The abscess must be drained once the condition is diagnosed. This usually requires surgery. Seek medical help.

DON'T:

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



For women, using an antiseptic vaginal wash several times a week may be helpful in preventing fungal infections.



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PINWORMS

Pinworms more likely affect children but the condition may spread to other family members as well. If pinworms are suspected, get a specimen by wrapping a popsicle stick with transparent tape. With the sticky side out and, spread the buttocks wide, and press the stick firmly on the anal opening for two minutes. Seal specimen in an air-tight plastic bag and bring to a medical practitioner.

Symptoms:

- Anal itching that worsens or intensifies at night accompanied by restlessness or irritability

DO:

- Take antiworm medication as directed by a physician.
- Keep the area clean and dry.

DON'T:

- Do not scratch the anal area as this may lead to further infection.

OTHER CAUSES

Other causes may include bowel disorders or poor hygiene.

SCRAPE OR ABRASION

Shallow injury wherein the top layers of the skin have been scraped off

CAUSES

Scrapes and abrasions are hardly serious because the shallow wounds tend to heal quickly and most often disappear without a trace. The wounds can be treated at home.

Symptoms:

- Shallow wound that is not too bloody and only slightly painful

DO:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with water and anti-bacterial soap to remove dirt.
- If bleeding is continuous, apply direct pressure on area using a soft piece of cloth or gauze. Cover scrape with bandage. Once a scab forms on the wound, bandage may be removed.
- If the scrape left a small flap of skin, gently trim it away to lessen tendency to be infected.
- For a non-bleeding wound, leave it uncovered after cleaning to enable it to dry quickly.
- If there is swelling and slight pain, place cold compress on the wound. Crushed ice wrapped in a small towel may help ease pain felt within 24 hours of injury.

DON'T:

- Don't pick wound scabs.