



Pruritus Ani

This leaflet tells you about the condition known as pruritus ani. It explains what is involved in treating it. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your doctor, but as a guide to be used in connection to what is discussed with your doctor.

What is Pruritus Ani?

Pruritus Ani is a common condition causing itching or irritation around the anus (back passage). It has many possible causes, including piles and certain skin conditions. Your doctor or surgeon would have excluded most causes.

The most common cause is a minor leakage from the anus. If small amounts of stool (bowel motion) or liquid mucus (slime) leak from the anus, this can irritate the delicate skin around the anus.

What can you do to help yourself?

Pruritus is often difficult to treat, and it may take months of gentle care to improve things. There are some things that you can do to help.

Personal Hygiene

- Pay special attention to hygiene. Be very careful to keep the area as clean as possible, ideally by careful washing and gentle drying at least once a day and after each bowel motion.
- If you don't have Access to a bidet, you may find that sitting on the edge of the bath and using a shower head (if available) makes washing easier. If you are out or at work, take a small plastic bottle of water into the toilet with you to wash after a bowel motion.
- Some people find that cold water is more soothing than warm.
- Wash without soap as soap can sting. It is best to use water on your hand rather than on a flannel. Never use soaps with a strong perfume or any antiseptics on your bottom.
- Use very soft white toilet tissue or you may find damp cotton wool the most comfortable.
- If you have a problem with leakage from the anus a small amount of damp cotton wool on your fingertip may be used to gently clean into the anus to make sure there is no residue left behind.
- If your leakage continues after wiping, a small plug of cotton wool in the anus may stop the stool from coming out to irritate the skin.

Information for Patients

- Dry the area by gentle patting with a soft towel or tissue. Avoid rubbing. If you are very sore you may find that a hairdryer on a low setting is the most comfortable way of drying the area.
- Try to avoid scratching the area, however tempting this may be. If you find that you are scratching in your sleep at night, get some cotton mittens (available from your chemist).
- Never use anything on your bottom except the treatment suggested by your specialist. This includes all cream, deodorants, talcum powder and antiseptics.
- Never put anything in your bath water. In particular, avoid all antiseptics, bath salts, bath oil and bubble bath.
- Wear loose cotton underwear and change daily. Avoid all man-made fabrics coming into contact with your bottom. Women should wear stockings or open crotch tights rather than regular tights, which can cause sweating. You should also avoid tight trousers or jeans, and sitting on plastic chairs for long periods.
- Wash your underwear in non-biological washing powder, and make sure that all traces of detergent are rinsed out.
- Try to establish a regular bowel habit.
- A diet high in fibre makes the stools softer and more likely to cause leakage. You can try to make your stools firmer and less likely to leak by cutting down on the amount of fibre in your diet. This means avoiding foods like bran cereals, muesli, beans, peas, pulses and nuts. Moderate your intake of fruit and vegetables, particularly those with skins.
- Avoid lagers and flat beers (i.e. those with high yeast content) as these can make the problem worse.
- Avoid coffee, chocolate and fruit juices high in citric acid for the same reason.

Contact Details:

If you are going to have an operation you may be asked to attend the hospital for a pre-operative assessment. Please ask our staff any questions you may have about your treatment. Alternatively, you can phone the main hospital switchboard on 0121 424 2000 and ask to speak to your consultant's secretary

Additional Sources of Information:

This leaflet is based on one designed by the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland, but has been modified (with permission) by us to reflect local policies. The Association of Coloproctology web site (www.acpgbi.org.uk) has further information on all aspects of colon and rectal disease.

You can go online and view NHS Choices website for more information about a wide range of health topics <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

You may want to visit one of our Health Information Centres located in:

Information for Patients

- Main Entrance at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital Tel: 0121 424 2280
- Treatment Centre at Good Hope Hospital Tel: 0121 424 9946

or contact us by email: healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk.

Our commitment to confidentiality

We keep personal and clinical information about you to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment. Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We will always ask you for your consent if we need to use information that identifies you. We will share information with other parts of the NHS to support your healthcare needs, and we will inform your GP of your progress unless you ask us not to. You can help us by pointing out any information in your records which is wrong or needs updating.

Dear Patient

We welcome your views on what you liked and suggestions for how things could be improved at this hospital. If you would like to tell us and others about your experience please make your comments through one of the following sites:-

- NHS Choice:- www.nhs.uk
- Patient Opinion:- www.patientopinion.org.uk
- I want great care:- www.iwantgreatcare.org (Here you can leave feedback about your doctor)

Be helpful and respectful: think about what people might want to know about this hospital or how your experiences might benefit others. Remember your words must be polite and respectful, and you cannot name individuals on the NHS Choice or Patient Opinion sites.

If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or treatment, or anything you do not understand or wish to know more about, write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.