

Anal Fissure Treatments

This *Health Facts for You* discusses treatment for an anal fissure.

An anal fissure is a small tear or cut in the skin lining the anus. Symptoms include:

- Extreme pain during bowel movements
- Red blood, bleeding with bowel movements
- Spasms of the anal muscles

Causes of Anal Fissures

- Hard, dry bowel movements
- Diarrhea
- Inflammation
- Trauma to the anus

Once a cut forms, it causes the muscle around the anal opening (sphincter) to spasm. These spasms make it hard for the cut to heal and can cause pain to last for some time after a bowel movement.

Treatment

An **acute fissure** (new onset) is treated without surgery. With improving bowel habits, the fissure may heal on its own. These changes include:

- Eating a high fiber diet
- Drinking more water
- Taking stool softeners
- Taking a bulk fiber such as Metamucil®

These changes allow you to pass soft stool and avoid constipation.

Take warm baths for 10-20 minutes several times a day to soothe and relax the anal muscles. Your doctor may also give you creams to help.

Types of Surgery

A **chronic fissure** (lasting more than a month or one that heals and comes back) may require surgery.

There are two types of surgery.

Sphincterotomy: Your surgeon creates a minor cut of the internal anal sphincter muscle. This treatment helps the fissure to heal by relaxing the sphincter and decreasing spasms.

Injections: The other type of surgery involves injecting Botox®, or a muscle relaxer, into the sphincter muscle to decrease the spasms.

After Surgery

It may take a few weeks for the fissure to completely heal. You will likely have less pain within a few days.

Take a sitz bath at least 3-4 times a day and after each bowel movement. A sitz bath is sitting in a bathtub of warm water for 10-20 minutes. This will help decrease the pain of muscle spasms and help you heal.

You may be told to take a stool softener (docusate sodium) and/or a bulk fiber laxative such as Metamucil®. Both prevent constipation. You can buy these without a prescription.

Please contact the clinic before resuming or starting any new creams near the surgical area.

Activities

- Change your position from sitting to standing to lying down for comfort.
- You may return to work when you feel ready.
- **No driving** while taking prescription pain pills.
- You may resume sex when you feel ready.

Follow Up

You will return to the clinic in 1-3 weeks.

When to Call

Call the clinic if you notice:

- Large amount of bright red blood that does not stop with pressure to the area for 10 minutes
- Fever over 100.4° F for 2 readings, taken 4 hours apart. Check for a fever once daily at the same time each day for a week
- Foul-smelling drainage
- Excess swelling
- You cannot control bowel movements
- Trouble passing urine

Who to Call

Digestive Health Center
(608) 242-2800

After hours, weekends, or holidays ask for the doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with area code. We will call you back.

Toll-free number: **855-342-9900**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 2/2025. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5467