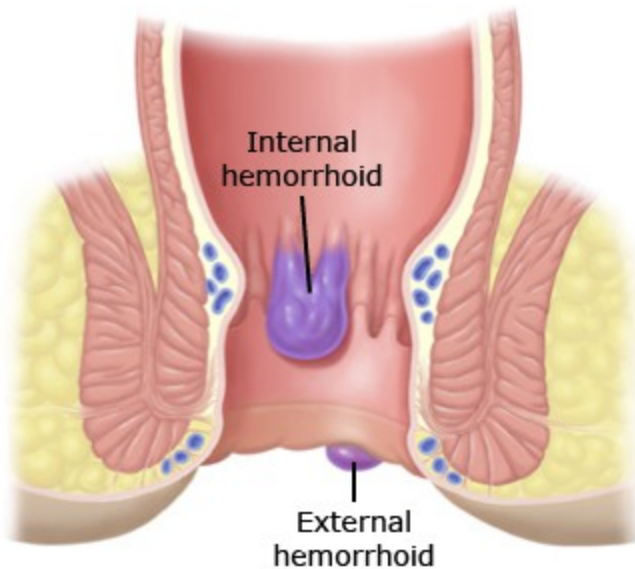


Hemorrhoids

What are hemorrhoids? — Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the rectum. They can cause itching and pain. Sometimes they can also make you bleed during a bowel movement.

In some cases, you can see or feel hemorrhoids around the outside of the rectum. In other cases, you cannot see them because they are hidden inside the rectum.



Should I see a doctor? — You should see a doctor if you have any bleeding or if your bowel movements look like tar. Bleeding could be caused by something other than hemorrhoids, so you should have it checked out.

If you do have hemorrhoids, your doctor can suggest treatments. But there some steps you can try on you your own first.

What can I do to keep from getting more hemorrhoids? — The most important thing you can do is to keep from getting constipated. You should have a bowel movement at least a few times a week. When you have a bowel movement, you also should not have to push too much. Plus, your bowel movements should not be too hard.

Being constipated and having hard bowel movements can make hemorrhoids worse. Here are some steps you can take to avoid getting constipated or having hard stools:

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. They have fiber, which helps to increase bowel movements.
- Take fiber powders, wafers, or pills. You should get 20 to 35 grams of fiber a day.
- Take medicines called stool softeners such as [docusate sodium](#) (sample brand names: Colace, Dulcolax) or bulk forming laxatives. Bulk forming laxatives include [psyllium seed](#) (sample brand names: Metamucil, Konsyl), [methylcellulose](#) (brand name: Citrucel), calcium [polycarbophil](#) (sample brand name: FiberCon), and wheat [dextran](#) (brand name: Benefiber). These medicines increase the number of bowel

movements you have. They are safe to take and they can prevent problems later.

What can I do to reduce my symptoms? — Some people feel better if they soak their buttocks in 2 or 3 inches of warm water. You can do this up to 2 to 3 times a day for 10 to 15 minutes. Do not add soap, bubble bath, or anything to the water.

There are also medicines that you can get without a prescription. They are usually creams or ointments that you rub on your anus to relieve pain, itching, and swelling. Some hemorrhoid medicines come in a capsule (called a suppository) that you put inside your rectum. Others come in a cream that comes in a bottle with a nozzle that you put inside your rectum. It is OK to try these medicines. But do not use medicines that have [hydrocortisone](#) (a steroid medicine) for more than a week, unless your doctor approves.

What if the self-care steps do not work? — If you still have symptoms after trying the steps listed above, you might need treatments to destroy or remove the hemorrhoids.

One popular treatment is called “rubber band ligation.” For this treatment, the doctor ties tiny rubber bands around the hemorrhoids. A few days later the hemorrhoids shrink and fall off. The doctor can also use lasers, heat, or chemicals to destroy hemorrhoids. But if none of these options works, there is always surgery to remove the hemorrhoids.