

# **Haemorrhoids (Piles)**

**Look After Your  
Insides**

**Your  
Questions  
Answered**

## What are Haemorrhoids?

Commonly known as PILES, they are a mass of small swollen blood vessels. They are a normal part of the body that become enlarged and are similar to varicose veins which can occur on the legs but are situated in the back passage.

## Who can get Haemorrhoids?

They are common in both men and women, and it is thought that up to one third of the population at one time or another suffers from them. Haemorrhoids are often treated as joke subject by people who do not suffer from them. For many years they have been a source of much embarrassment and therefore are not generally discussed in an everyday manner.

## What causes Haemorrhoids?

They are caused by an increased pressure in the veins of the anal canal. The most common cause of increased pressure is CONSTIPATION. Straining to pass a small hard stool causes the blood vessels in the anus to become congested, this congestion leads to swelling and over a period of time a haemorrhoid is formed. Haemorrhoids are common during PREGNANCY because of increased pressure in the abdomen. They can also occur after childbirth due to straining and pushing during labour. Haemorrhoids CANNOT be caught or caused by sitting down all day, or by sitting on cold hard surfaces.





## Signs & Symptoms

The swollen blood vessel which makes up the haemorrhoid can easily bleed, especially when passing a hard constipated stool. The bleeding is bright red in colour; you may notice splashes in the toilet bowl or staining on the toilet paper. Haemorrhoids can cause discomfort and pain when passing a stool. You may also notice itching or soreness around the anus and you can sometimes get a mucus or slime type discharge from the back passage. Some people get a feeling that the bowel is not empty after passing a motion.

## Complications

Haemorrhoids are a nuisance and can be extremely painful but they are NOT usually dangerous. Occasionally you can become anaemic if you have haemorrhoids which have been bleeding on and off for a long time. Sometimes a prolapsed haemorrhoid can become strangulated and its blood supply cut off; this is extremely painful.

## Diagnosis

It is important to consult your doctor for diagnosis and advice on treatment. The Doctor will need to examine your back passage, he/she will do this first with their finger and then with a small instrument with a bright light on the end which allows a visual inspection of the back passage. This should not be painful, many people find it more embarrassing than uncomfortable.

## Treatment

If your haemorrhoids are not too severe all that may be required is to treat your constipation with dietary changes and increased activity. If your haemorrhoids are causing you problems you may need to have them banded or injected. **BANDING**

is a common, simple and effective procedure which involves tying off a small haemorrhoid with a rubber band. The procedure is performed in an Outpatient Department and takes just a few moments. No anaesthetic is used and the procedure is usually painless. For three or four days following the procedure you may notice some fresh blood on the toilet paper or in the toilet bowl, this is quite normal. It is important not to strain when having your bowels open and your doctor may suggest you taking a stool softener for at least a few days following banding. You may experience an aching or throbbing sensation in the anal canal, a painkilling tablet such as paracetamol is very effective.


INJECTION of haemorrhoids or sclerotherapy is another effective Outpatient treatment for haemorrhoids. The haemorrhoid is injected with a liquid chemical which causes the piles to shrivel up and disappear. Immediately after the injection you may notice some fresh blood on the toilet paper and also in the toilet bowl; this is normal and could last for three or four days. Again, a painkilling drug such as paracetamol may be required. It is important that you do not strain for at least three to four days following the injection, this allows the treatment to be effective.

You may require a stool softener or need to increase your intake of fibre and fluids to help you have your bowels open with ease.

## What is Fibre?

Fibre is the part of food which your body cannot digest. A regular intake of fibre is important for healthy bowels. Fibre is found in foods such as wholegrain cereals, wholemeal bread, fruit, vegetables, salad, pulses, beans and peas.





As well as regular amounts of fibre in your food, you need to drink plenty of fluid, especially water 8-10 cups daily, to swell and soften the fibre.

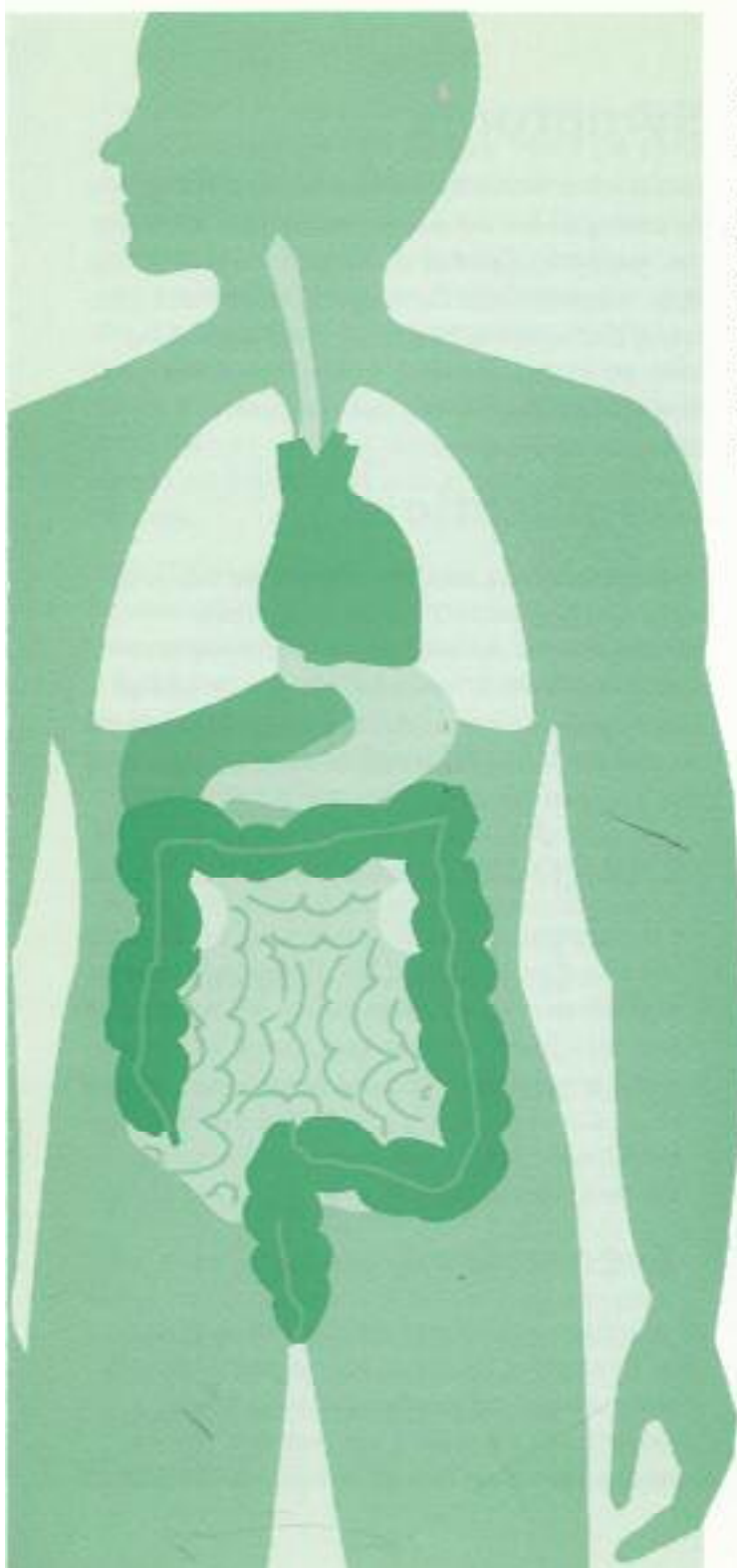
It is important to introduce fibre containing foods slowly as they may cause flatulence and abdominal discomfort initially. Take at least a month to get used to these new foods.

Occasionally when the haemorrhoids are too large to respond to the treatments mentioned above, an operation (haemorrhoidectomy) is necessary. This operation involves the removal of the entire haemorrhoid. This method requires a general anaesthetic and an admission to hospital. The operation has a reputation for being painful but modern methods make it quite comfortable.

## Remember

If you experience any of the symptoms listed below, it does not necessarily mean that you have colorectal cancer or any other serious health problem. However, you should not delay in seeking your doctor's advice.

- Blood in the stool.
- Diarrhoea or constipation that continues after two weeks.
- Stools that are smaller in width than usual.
- Chronic fatigue.
- Stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness, cramping, frequent gas pains).
- Unexplainable weight loss.



If you require any further  
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