



Thrombosed External Hemorrhoids

What are Thrombosed External Hemorrhoids?

A thrombosed external hemorrhoid is a painful swelling in the anal tissues caused by a clot (or “thrombus”) in one or more of the small veins in the anal skin. This may be brought on by prolonged sitting or constipation, but can also occur spontaneously. The swollen tissues are quite tender and painful and often have a characteristic bluish color, because of the underlying clot. Although very painful, the condition is not serious and resolves without specific treatment over several days to a week or two. At times, if the thrombosed hemorrhoid is very large, your doctor may remove some of the clot under local anesthesia. This is called ‘incision and drainage’ of thrombosed hemorrhoid. The area will continue to be painful even after this treatment however. It is unclear if this treatment is helpful in any way.

You should not have a fever with a thrombosed hemorrhoid. If you have pain, swelling and fever, it is more likely that you have a perianal abscess.

How can Thrombosed External Hemorrhoids be treated?

Conservative management consists of avoiding constipation by increasing the fluid and dietary fiber in your diet, taking anti-inflammatory pain medication such as Tylenol, ibuprofen or naproxen, and reducing activity. Sitz baths (i.e., soaking in warm water) may be helpful for comfort as well. The local pain and swelling should begin to subside after a few days, but it may take 2-3 weeks for lump to go away completely.

If you have had an incision and drainage:

1. Reduce activity for 12-24 hours. You can expect some minor bleeding or bloody drainage for a day or two after your procedure.
2. You may remove the initial dressing 12-24 hours.
3. If you have to move your bowels before then, you may remove the dressing at that time. After the dressing is removed, replace it with a plain cotton gauze dressing to absorb any drainage.
4. You may sit in a tub of warm water (Sitz bath) for 15-20 minutes 2-3 times a day and after bowel movements for comfort and cleanliness.

5. You may shower as you normally would.

How should I adjust my diet?

Eat a regular diet with emphasis on high fiber (vegetables, bran, etc.). Make sure you have adequate fiber (>30 grams/day) and non-caffeinated fluids (6-8 glasses) daily to prevent constipation.

What medications am I allowed to take?

If you received a prescription, take pain medication as directed. You should be aware that narcotic medications (Norco, Vicodin, etc.), cause constipation, which can make your pain worse and that non-narcotic medications, such as Extra Strength Tylenol, ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve, etc.) are equally if not more effective.

What activities am I allowed to do?

Resume normal activities as tolerated. Avoid strenuous activities or those likely to cause discomfort.

Follow-up:

Whether left to resolve on their own or surgically incised and drained, thrombosed hemorrhoids do not normally require any special follow-up for further investigation by a specialist. Having had a thrombosed hemorrhoid is not a sign of some other, underlying problem. There are no special preventive measures aside from avoiding prolonged sitting, avoiding constipation and being careful not to strain during bowel movements.

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