

Instructions for Managing Perianal Itching

Definition

Perianal itching (pruritus ani) is a common problem involving the perianal skin. Although we are often unable to determine its exact cause, we know that certain drugs, especially antibiotics, and certain foods and beverages, may be precipitating factors. Also, soap products used to wash the perianal skin may increase the irritation and itching.

Perianal Care

1. The basic aim of treatment is to keep the anal area clean, dry, and to avoid injury to the skin from excessive wiping or abrasion.
2. If troubled by itching during sleep, it is helpful to wear cotton gloves to prevent yourself from scratching.
3. When showering or bathing, avoid the use of perfumed soap. Especially avoid rubbing the anal area with the bar of soap or washcloth. Soap is highly alkaline and the residues collect in the folds of skin causing irritation and altering the normal acidity of the skin. Avoiding soap completely is preferable.
4. After bowel movements, instead of wiping vigorously, try wiping with moistened white paper, Tucks, or wet cotton. Place some Balneol on the paper and gently wipe or pat the area, then wipe the area until dry.
5. During the day, wear a thin piece of cotton off a roll of 100% absorbent cotton. The cotton strip should be thin enough so that you are not conscious of its presence. Do not use rayon cotton balls or cosmetic puffs. Change the cotton strip frequently, especially if you perspire. Wear cotton underwear.

Diet

1. Avoid foods that produce gas, indigestion or loose stools.
2. Foods that may cause increased mucus production include: tomatoes, ketchup, citrus fruits and juices, coffee, tea, alcoholic beverages, colas, nuts, popcorn, milk, chocolate, and spices. Avoid these foods or decrease their intake.

Medications

1. Apply only prescribed creams or medications as directed by your physician. Do not attempt to place the medication into the anal canal.
2. Desitin ointment may be helpful as well. Apply only a thin layer to the affected area.

Pruritus Ani will not abate promptly. Have patience. However, if symptoms do persist, please call again.

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

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