

Emergency Services

## Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids (sounds like 'hem-uh-roids') are also called 'piles'. They are swollen, inflamed veins around the anus (sounds like 'aye-nus') or lower rectum (sounds like 'rek-tum').

Most often, hemorrhoids are caused by straining hard to have a bowel movement ('go poo'). Increased pressure inside the abdomen can also cause them. You are more likely to get hemorrhoids if you are constipated, have severe diarrhea, sit for long periods, or are overweight. It is common for a pregnant woman to get hemorrhoids.

Hemorrhoids are not usually serious, but they can be quite painful and cause itching. Sometimes they can also make you bleed during a bowel movement. Some people need to have the hemorrhoids removed but this is uncommon.

### When to get help

Go see your family doctor or go to the nearest walk-in clinic if:

- Your pain or discomfort gets worse or does not get better after home treatment for 1 week.

### How to care for yourself at home

- Ways to reduce pain and swelling:
  - Apply hemorrhoid ointment. You can buy this without a prescription. Follow the directions on the label.
  - Sit in a tub of warm water for 15 to 20 minutes, 3 times a day. You can add Epsom salt to the water.
  - Try sitting on an ice pack for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Always have a layer of clothing between you and the ice pack.
- Take a stool softener to make your bowel movements softer and easier to pass. You can buy this without a prescription. Follow the directions on the label.
- When having a bowel movement, relax. Try not to hurry. Straining and holding your breath to push out the stool ('poo') puts more pressure on the veins.
- Gently clean the anal area with soft, moist toilet paper, baby wipes, or a cloth after each bowel movement.
- Try not to sit or stand for a long time. Sit on a pillow or 'donut' cushion.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water and other liquids each day. Do not drink coffee, tea, or alcohol. They increase fluid loss from your body and can cause constipation.
- Add fibre to your diet. Choose vegetables, fruits, oat and bran cereal, whole-grain bread, and brown rice.

## Hemorrhoids - *continued*

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### To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- Fraser Health Virtual Care  
1-800-314-0999 or live chat online at  
[fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare](http://fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare)  
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf  
and hard of hearing) or go online to  
[HealthLinkBC.ca](http://HealthLinkBC.ca)

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[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.