

Puritus Ani (Anal Itching)

Puritis ani (anal itching) is a common and often distressing problem involving the perianal skin. About half of the time, no clear cause for the itching is found. The other 50% of the time, the itching is related to hemorrhoids, fissures, diabetes, foods, medications, infections, or skin diseases. The treatment in these cases is directed toward the cause.

The following is a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” to help relieve anal itching:

DO

- DO use plain white Kleenex or a moist cotton wash cloth to wipe after bowel movements
- DO pat or wipe gently—never rub harshly
- DO use a hairdryer to dry the skin after cleansing oneself and bathing
- DO (if constipated) use bulk-forming agents: 100% bran (up to 1/3 cup per day in your food), whole wheat bread, and/or psyllium products (Konsyl, Metamucil, Effersyllium—1 rounded teaspoonful in a glass of water or juice 2-3 times per day). If your stools become too loose, decrease the amount of bulk. If your stools become too constipated, increase the amount of bulk
- DO watch your diet and eliminate foods that seem to make your condition worse
- DO wear loose clothing and underclothing
- DO wear underwear made from cotton (rather than nylon)
- DO take tub baths initially (especially after bowel movements). If infection is present, one tablespoonful of Clorox added to the bath may aid in relief
- DO use gauze or a cotton ball between the buttocks, especially if you perspire
- DO have patience as it may take several weeks for the symptoms to resolve; and return to the office as scheduled or call for a return visit
- DO take all your medications as prescribed

DON'T

- DON'T scratch
- DON'T use scented, colored, or floral pattern toilet tissue
- DON'T use alcohol-based cleansing pads or harsh or scented soaps
- DON'T use caffeine, spices, pepper, alcoholic beverages, cola drinks, coffee, tea, chocolate, tomatoes, popcorn, or nuts. When your symptoms (itching) disappear, you may be able to tolerate these in moderation.
- DON'T rub the anal area—pat or gently wipe