



Colon and Rectal Clinic

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Anal Fissure

What is an anal fissure?

A fissure is a cut/tear in the lining of the anal canal.

What causes an anal fissure?

Any form of trauma to the anal canal can result in anal fissure. It usually results from injury caused by a hard and dry bowel movement. Rare causes include diarrhea and inflammatory anal conditions.

What symptoms does the patient experience with an anal fissure?

Fissure give raise to severe pain and bleeding associated with bowel movements. Some patients report overhanging skin at the anal verge, which is often mistaken for hemorrhoids. In reality, this is a skin tag that results from the anal fissure.

How do you treat anal fissure?

Most acute fissures heal with non-operative treatment. The basic principles of treatment include local care and management of constipation and hard stool. Local treatment includes sitz bath (sitting in a tub of warm tap water) for 15 to 20 minutes, three to four times a day and topical ointments or creams such as analpram, proctofoam, nitroglycerine or lidocaine. A pea sized amount of the nitroglycerine ointment is applied inside the anal canal with a Q-tip or a finger gloved with finger cotton. Its dose may have to be decreased if it causes headache. It cannot be combined with drugs used for erectile dysfunction or other cardiac medications. The headache is usually less pronounced, if plenty of water is consumed during its use. Lying down and taking Tylenol may alleviate the headache. The head ache becomes less intense after a week of the use of the topical creams. Heart palpitations or chest pain may need discontinuation of the drug and wiping/washing off the cream from the anal area. Also, seek prompt medical attention if the above symptoms persist. Constipation can be improved by taking 25-35 grams of fiber along with 6-8 glasses of water.

What happens when medical treatment fails?

If medical treatment fails you may be offered removal of the fissure with Botox injection or surgery, after consideration is given to exclude other causes of fissures.

What does surgery involve?

Surgery for anal fissure involves division of part of the sphincter muscles. This may rarely cause minor problems with incontinence, more often noticed in females.

How long does it take for healing to occur after surgery?

The pain gets relieved instantaneously or in a few days. However, it takes a few weeks for the fissure to heal.