**PILES:**

Piles are one of the most common but misunderstood medical conditions affecting millions of people around the world. The condition manifests when veins in the rectum and anus get swollen and inflamed causing pain, discomfort, and bleeding during bowel movements or while sitting. The disease can occur internally and externally leading to uncomfortable and disturbed quality of life.

While some factors like chronic constipation, pregnancy, prolonged sitting, and a sedentary lifestyle could be one of the reasons for the disease, a diet low in fiber can also be the contributing factor which can lead to hard stool thus increasing straining causing local tissue trauma that can induce bleeding.

**TYPES AND GRADES OF PILES :**

Types of Piles:

1. Internal Piles: The internal piles within the rectum aren’t usually visible and do not typically cause discomfort. There are various grades of internal piles:

Grade I: Piles that bleed but do not prolapse or protrude out of the anus.

Grade II: Piles that prolapse during a bowel activity and retract spontaneously without interference.

Grade III: Piles that prolapse but do not go back inside the anus until you push them manually.

Grade IV: Grade IV are always prolapsed and cannot be pushed back as they are large inflamed and highly sensitive.

1. External Piles: The external piles can occur in the sensitive anal region, around the anus and are visible on the outside. It can cause pain and bleeding during bowel movements and can be seen and felt as lumps.
2. Prolapsed Piles: When internal piles become enlarged and bulge outside the anus, it gets difficult to push the prolapsed pile back inside which then leads to discomfort and pain. They may bleed and cause severe discomfort.
3. Thrombosed Piles: Thrombosed piles manifest when a blood clot is formed within piles which leads to more pain and inflammation. Surgery is needed to remove the clot and lead a pain-free life.

**PILES SYMPTOMS:**

Feeling discomfort while sitting and standing is the common symptom of piles followed by:

* Pain in the anus /rectum.
* Dropping blood while pooping/bright red blood on your toilet tissue.
* Uncomfortable Itch and spasms.
* Strain during bowel movements, constipation, and chronic diarrhea.
* A hard, discolored lump near the anus.

**PILES CAUSES:**

* Change in bowel movements: Chronic constipation or long-lasting diarrhea can lead to changes in stool which could be the contributing factor to Piles.
* Previous medical history: Anal injury, Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), OR Crohn’s disease/Ulcerative Colitis could contribute to strain leading to Piles.
* Life-changing situations: Pregnancy, and trauma from previous surgery could lead to swelling and inflammation in blood vessels around the rectum.
* Diet: This could also be a contributing factor as a low-fiber diet can lead to constipation or straining while passing stool which can lead to pressure on blood vessels resulting in symptoms of Piles.
* Inflammation: Consuming extremely spicy food, fried food items, and food high in cheese can lead to inflammation in the bowels resulting in piles.

COMPLICATIONS/RISKS DUE TO PILES:

* It can lead to fear to poop due to uncomfortable bowel experiences.
* Piles, if not treated well on time can lead to Anemia.
* Challenge to lead a confident life due to constant pain, itch, and bleeding after the bowel movement.
* If not well addressed could lead to further infections as a painful anal region can lead to poor hygiene
* If blood supply to an internal hemorrhoid is absent then it can cause gangrene.

**PILES DIAGNOSIS:**

Piles can be diagnosed by a healthcare provider through physical examination, medical history, and diagnostic tests.

* Medical history: A proctologist or an anorectal surgeon would enquire about physical symptoms questioning specifically about pain, itching, bleeding, or any recent changes in the bowel movement.
* Examination: They would also perform a physical examination to examine the anal area carefully using gloved fingers to check for any swelling/lumps or abnormalities.
* Digital Rectal Examination (DRE): In some cases, a digital rectal examination may be performed wherein the doctor inserts the lubricated finger to perform an internal examination to check for any abnormalities in and around the rectum and anus.
* Anoscopy or Proctoscopy: A small lubricated tube (an anoscope) is passed smoothly through the anus to visualize the anal canal and rectum more closely; some patients might experience slight discomfort from external bloating or cramping during the procedure. The procedure helps doctors know the exact location, size, and how severe the disease is spread assisting them to prepare the right treatment plan.
* Sigmoidoscopy:  A sigmoidoscopy is a diagnostic procedure where your healthcare provider uses a sigmoidoscope (lighted tube with a camera) to view the lower part of the colon and rectum. Procedure types include flexible sigmoidoscopy and rigid sigmoidoscopy. Your healthcare provider shall visualize the rectum and lower sigmoid colon by flexible and rigid sigmoidoscopy, aiding in identifying various conditions, including piles.
* Colonoscopy: Your doctor may prescribe a colonoscopy in some cases where he would examine the colon or the large intestine to check the abnormalities inside it. A long, flexible tube called a colonoscope is passed via the rectum, the tube has a light and a camera on one end, it can cause slight discomfort to some patients but is usually painless.

**TREATMENT:**

Various surgical methods are performed to give relief from piles and help live a disease-free life:

* Laser Surgery: This is the safest, minimally invasive, and most effective surgical option performed on an outpatient basis. The laser beam is used in the procedure to cut off the blood supply to the piles. It causes piles to shrink and eventually disappear. [Pile](https://www.hexahealth.com/treatment/piles-laser-treatment) is a quick and relatively painless procedure.
* Haemorrhoidectomy: In this surgery, doctors remove the swollen veins in the anus or rectum that cause piles. It is usually done for large or protruding piles and requires general anesthesia.
* Stapled Haemorrhoidectomy: This procedure involves using a stapling device to cut off the blood flow to the piles and reposition them back inside the anus.  This procedure is less painful than traditional surgery but may not be suitable for all types of piles.
* Hemorrhoidal Artery Ligation: During this minimally invasive procedure, the surgeon uses ultrasound to locate the blood vessels supplying the piles and ties them off, which causes the piles to shrink and eventually fall off. It is generally used for grade-1 piles.

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| Features | Open Surgery | Laser Surgery |
| Cuts | Multiple | Minimal |
| Scars & Stitches | Multiple | Minimal |
| Procedure | Painful | Minimal Pain |
| Blood Loss | High | Low |
| Infection Chances | High | Minimal |
| Recovery | Bed Rest | Fast Recovery |
| Hospital Duration | Long | Short |

**WHO IS AT RISK:**

* Sedentary lifestyle: Prolonged sitting and less movement especially on hard surfaces can lead to strain on blood vessels resulting risk of piles.
* Pregnancy: Once the size of the uterus grows due to the developing size of the fetus, this can lead to pressure on rectal veins leading to piles.
* Growing age: It can affect all age groups but is most commonly diagnosed in age groups between 45-65.
* Chronic constipation: Chronic constipation can lead to more strain during the bowel movement resulting in developing a risk of piles
* Lifting heavy weights: Lifting heavy weights can put undue pressure on rectal veins leading to their weakness, hence an increase in piles
* Genetics: A person is more at risk of piles if the history of the disease runs in the family.

**WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR:**

It is of utmost pertinent to visit a proctologist/ if your symptoms persist for days/weeks. Your doctor may ask specific questions, and enquire about symptoms and previous medical history to suggest further line of treatment. Seek an immediate appointment while you experience below symptoms:

* Severe throbbing pain and itching.
* Persistent bleeding which is bright red.
* Constipation.
* Strain during bowel movement.
* Inflammation and swelling.