

Treating Hemorrhoids: Self-Care



Follow your healthcare provider's advice about caring for your hemorrhoids at home. Some treatments help relieve symptoms right away. Others involve making changes in your diet and exercise habits. These can help ease constipation and may prevent hemorrhoids from coming back.

Relieving symptoms

Your healthcare provider may prescribe anti-inflammatory medicine to help ease your symptoms. These tips will also help relieve pain, swelling, and itching.

- **Take sitz baths.** Taking a sitz bath means sitting in a few inches of warm bath water. Soaking for 10 minutes twice a day can provide relief from painful hemorrhoids. It can also help the area stay clean.
- **Develop good bowel habits.** Use the bathroom when you need to. Don't ignore the urge to move your bowels. This can lead to constipation, hard stools, and straining. Also don't read while on the toilet. Sit only as long as needed. Wipe gently with soft, unscented toilet tissue, baby wipes, or medicated wipes.
- **Use ice packs.** Placing an ice pack on an external hemorrhoid can help relieve pain right away. It will also help reduce the blood clot. Use the ice for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Keep a cloth between the ice and your skin to prevent skin irritation or damage.
- **Use other measures.** Laxatives and enemas can help ease constipation. But use them only on your healthcare provider's advice. For symptom relief, try using cotton pads soaked in witch hazel. These are available at most drugstores. Over-the-counter hemorrhoid ointments and petroleum jelly can also provide relief.

Add fiber to your diet



Adding fiber to your diet can help relieve constipation by making stools softer and easier to pass. To increase your fiber intake, your healthcare provider may recommend a bulking agent, such as psyllium. This is a high-fiber supplement available at most grocery stores and drugstores. Eating more fiber-rich foods will also help. There are two types of fiber:

- Insoluble fiber (fiber that does not dissolve) is the main ingredient in bulking agents. It's also found in foods such as wheat bran, whole-grain breads, fresh fruits, and vegetables.
- Soluble fiber (fiber that dissolves) is found in foods such as oat bran. Although soluble fiber is good for you, it may not ease constipation as much as foods high in insoluble fiber.

Drink more water

Along with a high-fiber diet, drinking more water can help ease constipation. This is because insoluble fiber absorbs water, making stools soft and bulky. Be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day. Drinking fruit juices, such as prune juice or apple juice, can also help prevent constipation.

Get more exercise

Regular exercise aids digestion and helps prevent constipation. It's also great for your health. So talk with your healthcare provider about starting an exercise program. Low-impact activities, such as swimming and walking, are good places to start. Take it easy at first. And remember to drink plenty of water when you exercise.

High-fiber foods

High-fiber foods offer many benefits. By making your stools softer, they help heal and prevent swollen hemorrhoids. They may also help reduce the risk of colon and rectal cancer. Best of all, they're usually low in calories and taste great. Here are some examples of fiber-rich foods.

- Whole grains, such as wheat bran, corn bran, and brown rice
- Vegetables, especially carrots, broccoli, cabbage, and peas
- Fruits, such as apples, bananas, raisins, peaches, prunes, and pears
- Nuts and legumes, especially peanuts, lentils, and kidney beans

Easy ways to add fiber

The tips below offer some simple ways to add more high-fiber foods to your meals.

- Start your day with a high-fiber breakfast. Eat a wheat bran cereal along with a sliced banana. Or try peanut butter on whole-wheat toast.
- Eat carrot sticks for snacks. They're easy to prepare, taste great, and are low in calories.
- Use whole-grain bread instead of white bread for sandwiches.
- Eat fruits for treats. Try an apple and some raisins instead of a candy bar.

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