

Itchy bottom

An itchy bottom (anus) is not usually a sign of anything serious. You can often do simple things yourself to ease the itching. Talk to your GP if the itching does not stop. In rare cases, it can be a sign of a bigger health issue.

An itchy bottom that's worse at night is often caused by [threadworms](#), especially in children.

Children under 2, and pregnant and breastfeeding women cannot usually take medicine for threadworms. Contact your GP or midwife instead.

How to ease an itchy bottom yourself

Do

- ✓ gently wash and dry your bottom after pooing and before bed
- ✓ wear loose-fitting cotton underwear
- ✓ keep cool – avoid clothing and bedding that makes you overheat
- ✓ have cooler, shorter showers or baths (under 20 minutes)
- ✓ eat plenty of fibre – such as fruit and vegetables, wholegrain bread, pasta and cereal to avoid runny poo or constipation

Don't

- ✗ do not scratch – if you cannot stop, keep your fingernails short and wear cotton gloves at night
- ✗ do not strain when you go to the toilet
- ✗ do not use scented soaps, bubble bath or bath oil

- ✗ do not use perfumes or powders near your bottom
- ✗ do not eat spicy food or drink lots of alcohol and caffeine – these can make itching worse

A pharmacist can help with an itchy bottom

Ask your pharmacist to discuss this in the private area of the pharmacy.

They can suggest:

- creams and ointments you can buy to help ease itching
- medicine and things you should do at home if it's caused by threadworms

Using creams and ointments for an itchy bottom

Do not use:

- more than 1 cream or ointment at the same time
- any cream or ointment for longer than a week – they can irritate your skin and make things worse

Talk to your GP if the itchiness:

- does not ease after 3 or 4 days
- keeps coming back
- worries you or makes it hard to sleep
- comes with itching elsewhere on the body

What happens at your appointment

Your GP will try to work out the cause of your itching. They might need to check your bottom (rectal examination).

Depending on the cause, your GP might:

- suggest trying things to ease it yourself for a little longer
- prescribe medicine or stronger creams and ointments

ⓘ Important

Tell your GP immediately if a medicine, cream or ointment makes the itching worse.

Sexual health clinics can help with an itchy bottom

You can also contact a sexual health clinic if you think your itchy bottom might be caused by a [sexually transmitted infection \(STI\)](#) - [sexualwellbeing.ie](#). For example, if you've had unprotected sex.

[Find a sexual health clinic - sexualwellbeing.ie](#)

Common causes of an itchy bottom

There's not always a clear cause of an itchy bottom. If it gets better quickly, it might have been caused by something that does not need treatment. For example, sweating a lot in hot weather.

If it lasts longer, you might be able to get an idea of the cause from any other symptoms you have. But do not self-diagnose. See your GP if you're worried.

Possible causes	threadworms , especially in children
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Gets worse at night, worms in poo (they look like small pieces of thread)
Possible causes	piles (haemorrhoids)
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Lumps, bright red blood and pain when pooing
Possible causes	diarrhoea or incontinence
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Poo leaking or pooing you cannot control
Possible causes	Sores, swelling or irritation
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Ringworm or an STI like genital warts
Possible causes	Itching elsewhere on the body
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Skin condition, such as eczema or psoriasis
Possible causes	While using long-term medicine
Other symptoms with itchy bottom	Side effect of steroid creams, some gels and ointments for anal fissure, and peppermint oil

It's unusual for an itchy bottom on its own to be related to something more serious. But rarely, it may be a sign of something like anal or bowel cancer. It's important to get it checked by your GP.

Content supplied by the [NHS](#) and adapted for Ireland by the HSE

Sláintecare.

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

Page last reviewed: 8 April 2021

Next review due: 8 April 2024

HSE Live - we're here to help

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

[HSE Facebook](#)

[HSE Instagram](#)

[HSE TikTok](#)

[HSE YouTube](#)

[HSE LinkedIn](#)

[HSE X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Complaints and feedback](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Cookie statement](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy statement](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

© Health Service Executive