

HAEMORRHOIDS (PILES)

Haemorrhoids (also called piles) are swellings inside your bottom (rectum and anus) that develop when blood vessels fill with more blood than usual and swell up. Piles can be internal (develop high up inside) or external (develop closer to your anus than internal piles).

Symptoms of piles include: soreness, redness and swelling around your anus, a mucus discharge after passing a stool (poo), an itchy bottom, and bleeding after a poo – the blood is usually bright red. Sometimes a lump may hang down outside the anus. Piles can be painful if their blood supply is slowed or interrupted. Some people may not have symptoms or know that they have piles.

How can I treat piles?

Piles symptoms will often settle down after a few days without needing treatment.

Your pharmacy will have medicines that may help with the symptoms, but these products will not cure your piles.

Constipation (difficulty passing poo) and straining on the toilet can make your piles worse. It may help to take a medicine called a laxative to make it easier to poo, for example, **ispaghula husk** (such as Fybogel), **lactulose** and **docusate sodium**. But don't use stimulant laxatives such as senna because these may make your symptoms worse. Ask your pharmacist for advice or for a leaflet on treating constipation.

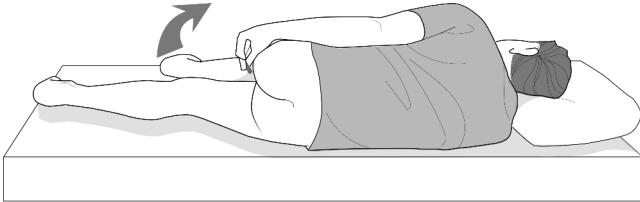
Paracetamol tablets can help to relieve the pain associated with piles. If you are taking warfarin then have an INR test 5 to 7 days after starting paracetamol treatment, because taking paracetamol may change your INR.

There are creams, ointments and suppositories that can help with the itching, swelling and pain of piles. Suppositories treat symptoms inside your rectum and anus, whereas creams and ointments treat symptoms inside and around your rectum and anus. Examples are **Anusol** and **Scheriproct**. Your pharmacist can help you choose a suitable product.

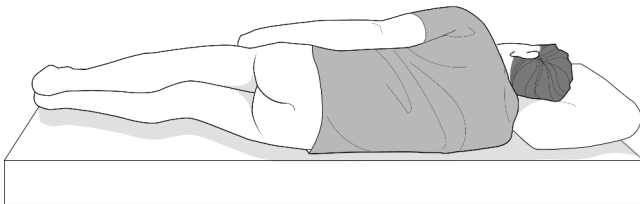
- For external piles, use your finger to spread a pea-sized amount of the cream or ointment around and just inside your anus.
- Suppositories can be used for internal piles (see below on how to use a suppository).
- Most of these medicines should be used morning and night and after pooing, but check the leaflet that comes with the medicine because some should only be used morning and night. Wash the anal area and dry gently before using the medicine.
- Only use these medicines for a few days (not longer than 7 days). Stop using these medicines if your symptoms get worse while using them.

How do I use a suppository, internal cream or ointment?

- Go to the toilet for a poo first if you need to.
- Wash your anal area and dry gently.
- Wash your hands.
- Take the wrapping off the suppository or if using cream or ointment fill the nozzle that comes with it.
- Squat or lie on your side with one leg bent and the other straight.



- Push the suppository into your anus, pointed end first. If you have pushed it in far enough, it should not slip out.
- If using cream or ointment insert the nozzle carefully into your anus until the whole length of the nozzle is inside. While squeezing the tube gently take the nozzle out of your anus.
- Put your legs back together and stay still for a few minutes.



- Wash the nozzle with hot, soapy water and rinse thoroughly.
- Wash your hands again.

The suppository will melt inside your body and it is normal for some to leak out. Because of this, you may prefer to use suppositories at night before going to bed.

What else can help?

- Eat plenty of fibre, such as fruit, vegetables, cereals, beans, nuts, seeds and wholegrain foods such as bread and rice.
- Drink plenty of water – try to have 6 to 8 glasses a day.
- Avoid straining when you poo, and go to the toilet when you need to – don't delay.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Try to exercise regularly.
- Cut down on caffeine and alcohol.
- Keep the area around your anus clean. Using wipes instead of dry toilet paper may help. Pat your bottom dry.

Do I need to see my doctor?

See your doctor to confirm that you have piles and nothing else is causing your symptoms. Your pharmacist can only give you 1 treatment before your doctor confirms that you have piles.

See your doctor if you:

- are pregnant
- under 18 years old
- have tummy pain that doesn't go away quickly
- have diarrhoea (watery poo) at night for several nights
- have lost weight and you don't know why
- have bleeding from your anus
- have a lasting change in your toilet habits, for example, you are pooing more often and your poo is looser
- have a temperature and swelling and itching around your anus – you may have an infection
- have a lump near your anus and it's painful to sit down.

Where can I find further information?

Patient UK: www.patient.info

NHS choices: www.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.