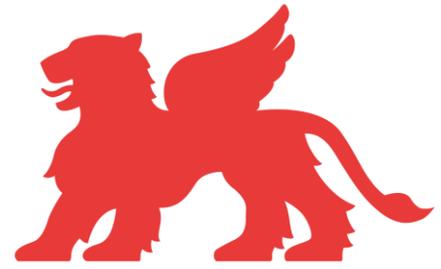


Patient Information Leaflet



ST MARK'S

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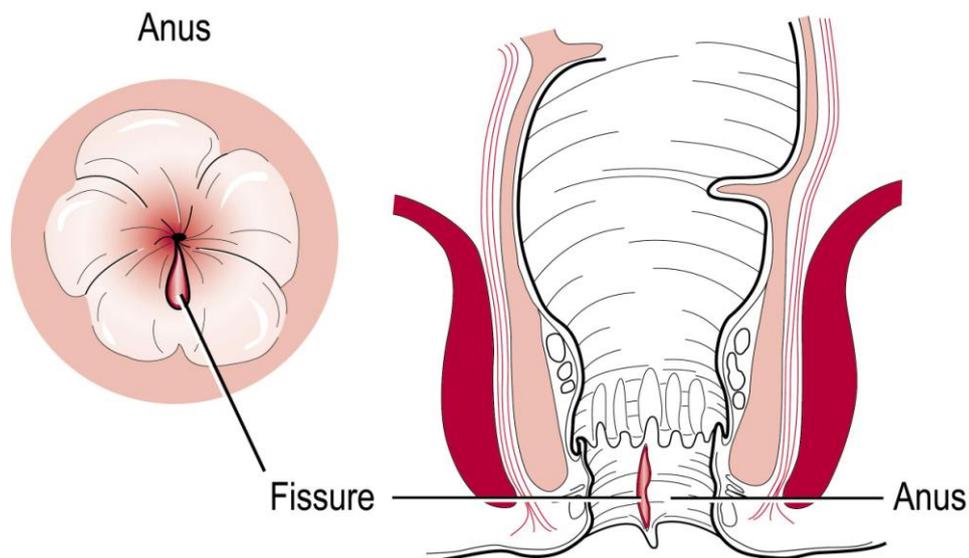
Treating an Anal Fissure -
Lateral Sphincterotomy operation

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What is an anal fissure?

An anal fissure often starts as a tear or crack in the skin lining the anal canal. This later becomes a type of ulcer (see diagram). A fissure most often affects young adults, but it can occur at any age.

An anal fissure can cause pain on opening the bowels (and this pain can last up to several hours afterwards) and bleeding (often with blood on the toilet paper when you wipe) and sometimes irritation or itching around the anus. Some fissures heal on their own with no treatment, or just with a high fibre diet to keep the stools soft. But sometimes a fissure can cause chronic problems, with symptoms which keep coming back, even over several years. It is not known what causes most fissures. Sometimes it is passing a hard constipated stool, but many people with fissures have not been constipated. Diarrhoea can also lead to a fissure in some people.



How will the operation help me?

Your surgeon has inspected your fissure and has recommended surgery. The lateral sphincterotomy operation divides part of the internal muscle in the anal canal. This relieves the pain associated with a fissure and allows the fissure to heal. Healing will usually occur within two to four weeks.

What preparation is needed before the operation?

Usually no specific preparation is needed. It is often possible to do this operation as a day case. You will be asked some questions about your general state of health by the

nurses and doctors on the ward, and this is a good time to discuss any further questions that you have about the operation.

What will happen when I come back from the operating theatre?

You will have a dressing in place around the entrance to the anus. Some discomfort is to be expected. Painkillers or local anaesthetic gel are available: please ask your nurse if you need something to help with discomfort.

When you are awake you will be able to eat and drink as you wish, and to get up as soon as you feel able. It is advisable to stay on the ward until the effects of the anaesthetic have completely worn off.

How long will I be in hospital?

We will usually do this operation as a day case, but occasionally we will want you to stay in hospital for a day or so after the operation. If your operation is done as a day case, you will need someone to come and collect you.

Washing and personal hygiene

You should have a bath the day after your operation and this will soak the dressing out (it may need a little gentle pull). It is quite possible that you may bleed a little in the bath (do not be alarmed - this can make the water look very red!).

You will probably find that frequent baths are soothing to the area.

- It is important to keep the area clean.
- Try to take a bath or shower, or use the bidet after each time you open your bowels.
- You will probably notice a little blood on your stools or on the toilet paper, usually for seven to 10 days after the operation. This is to be expected and is nothing to worry about.
- After a bowel motion women should remember to wipe front to back, away from the vaginal area.
- Once you are back to your normal life, bathing every time you open your bowels may become less practical, but you should continue to wash after a bowel action if at all possible for three or four weeks after the operation.
- You may find that sitting on the edge of the bath and using a shower attachment (if available) is a convenient way of cleaning the area.
- There are no stitches which will need taking out.

- It will be more comfortable for you to open your bowels if your stools are soft, so try to eat a diet high in fibre, and consider taking a mild laxative if your stools are hard.
- You may find that you have a minor mucus discharge from the anus for a few days after the operation. A small pad or panty liner will prevent any staining of your pants.

How long should I stay off work?

The time taken to get back to normal activities varies for different people. Do as much as you feel comfortable doing. If you need to take painkillers, paracetamol is usually sufficient. If you do need anything stronger, these may make you drowsy, so you should avoid driving or operating machinery. If lifting causes you discomfort you should avoid it. Most people need a day or so off work, but this will depend a little on what you do. Other activities, including sexual relationships, can be resumed as soon as you feel comfortable to do so.

Are there any problems associated with the operation?

Usually after a lateral sphincterotomy, your fissure should heal within two to four weeks, and it is hoped that it will not return. However, we cannot guarantee that you will never get another fissure, and in a few cases they do return.

Occasionally there is more difficulty in cleaning the anal area after a bowel action following sphincterotomy. Moist toilet tissue may make this easier. A few people also experience difficulty in controlling wind (flatus). If either of these becomes a problem for you, please ask your doctor for advice.

What should I do if I want further information?

If you have a problem or any questions immediately after you go home, please call the ward where you had your operation. If a problem occurs after a few days at home, please contact your own family doctor or district nurse for advice.

Contact details:

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