

Patient Information Leaflet

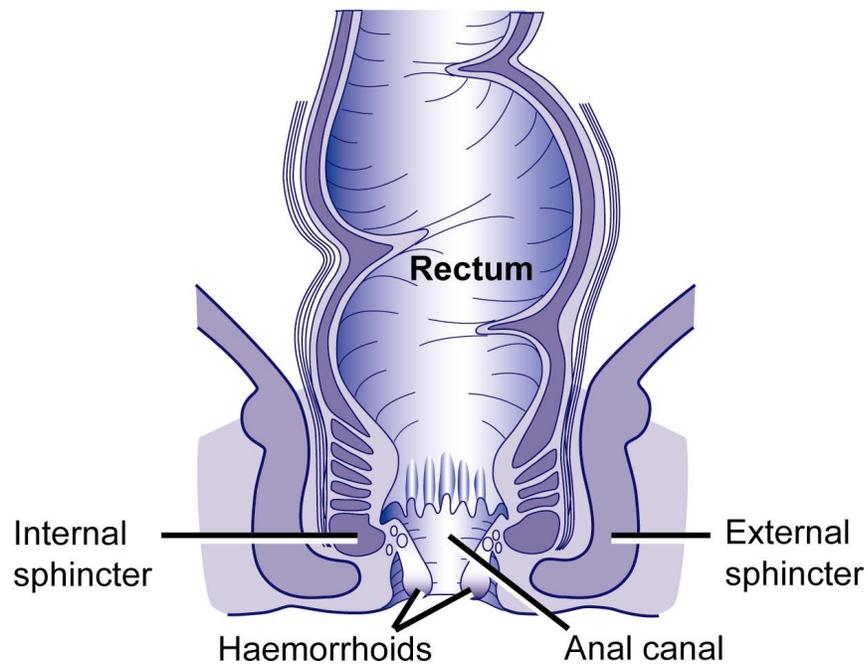


Your Haemorrhoid Operation

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What are haemorrhoids?

Everyone has swellings in the anal canal (back passage) called anal cushions. These bulges in the lining of the anal canal act like the washer on a tap and help to prevent leaks from the back passage and maintain continence. Over time these swellings can lose their normal structure and become stretched. This can lead them to bleed, or protrude outside the anus (prolapse). When this happens they are called haemorrhoids, or piles. They can lead to symptoms including bleeding, discomfort, itching and a feeling of incomplete bowel emptying. It is not known why some people suffer from piles and others do not. There is an association with constipation and straining, but they can be associated with a normal bowel habit. They are more common in some families, and during or after pregnancy. Up to one in three people will suffer from haemorrhoids during their lifetime. There are a number of different treatments. Only a small proportion of patients will have haemorrhoids severe enough to require an operation.



How will the operation help me?

Your surgeon has advised that your haemorrhoids are severe or troublesome enough to need an operation. This involves cutting away the haemorrhoid swellings and removing them. Some surgeons use a newer technique to 'hitch up' the piles with the use of a stapling device. This removes a ring of tissue from the lining of the bowel above the haemorrhoids, causing the haemorrhoids to shrink down. Your surgeon will tell you which operation is most suitable for you.

What preparation is needed before the operation?

You will usually come into hospital on the day before, or the day of the operation. Usually no specific preparation is needed, but you may be asked to take a medicine such as lactulose to keep the bowel motions soft before the operation. You will be asked some general questions about your health on the ward by the doctors and nurses and asked to sign a consent form. If you have any specific concerns about the operation, this is a good time to ask any questions you might have.

What will happen after the operation?

You will be taken back to the ward, where you will remain until the effects of the anaesthetic have worn off. It is normal to have some discomfort, but this can be eased by painkillers. Ask the nurse if you require painkillers.

You can eat and drink as soon as you wish, and get up as soon as you feel able.

Occasionally, a dressing is put in the back passage to help control bleeding after the operation. This may dissolve, or may need to be removed. You will be told if it is one that needs to be removed.

You will be given painkillers and gentle laxatives to take home with you after the operation.

You can have a bath the next day if you wish. Warm baths can be soothing for the area.

Opening your bowels after the operation

You will be given a laxative to take home with you, to make it easier to open your bowels after the operation. It may be that you experience some discomfort and a little bleeding on opening your bowels for the first time. This is to be expected. It is a good idea to take painkillers 15-20 minutes before opening your bowels. You may find a wet cloth, or alcohol-free wet wipes are more comfortable than dry paper for wiping yourself. You may prefer to have a bath or shower after opening your bowels to ensure the area is kept clean.

How long will I be in hospital?

If your operation is a day case procedure you can go home as soon as the effects of the anaesthetic have worn off. You must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Occasionally you may be kept in hospital until you are reasonably comfortable having your bowels open. This is usually after a day or two.

After the operation

There are certain things that can cause patients concern after an operation of this sort.

Bleeding

It is expected that you will have some bleeding. This is quite normal and you should not be alarmed. The amount should be less than an egg-cupful per day. It can be difficult to estimate how much bleeding there is, as it always appears more – especially in the toilet bowl or the bath. If you think there is a lot of bleeding, please contact us.

Mucus

If you have the haemorrhoid operation which leaves open wounds to heal you may get some mucus (slime) discharge for a few weeks after the operation. This is usually minor, and settles by itself over time. You may find it helpful to wear a pad in your underwear.

Difficulty passing water

This can sometimes be a problem for men. If you experience difficulty in passing water (urinating), sitting in a warm bath and attempting to go while relaxed is sometimes helpful. If this does not help and you are in discomfort, you should go to your nearest hospital.

When should I return to normal activities?

The time taken to return to normal activities varies from person to person. You should do as much as you feel comfortable doing.

Avoid heavy lifting straight after the operation.

You can return to work as soon as you feel able. This will depend on what you do. It is normal to have a few days off work after a haemorrhoid operation.

You can resume sexual relations as soon as you feel comfortable.

Can I prevent the haemorrhoids from coming back?

There is no guarantee that your haemorrhoids will never come back, though the majority of people need no further intervention. Occasionally a more minor procedure is required to remove any extra haemorrhoid tissue not removed at the first operation. Increasing the fibre in your diet and your fluid intake can help prevent further problems with haemorrhoids. We know that avoiding straining and constipation is the most useful thing patients can do to prevent the problem coming

back. If the fibre content of your diet is not sufficient to keep your stools soft, then a fibre supplement (such as Fybogel) can help.

What should I do if I want further information?

If you have a problem or a question immediately after you go home, please call the ward where you were an inpatient. If the problem occurs after a few days at home, please contact your family doctor or district nurse for advice.

Contact details:

St Mark's Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 3UJ

Frederick Salmon Ward South - 020 8235 4022

Frederick Salmon Ward North – 020 8235 4191

Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Wing - 020 8869 3399

Call centre – 020 8235 4061

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