

COLORECTAL SURGERY

7 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HAEMORRHOIDS

An uncomfortable and common condition, haemorrhoids affect every patient differently, depending on their level of severity. We look at each level and the common queries surrounding the condition.



Commonly known as piles, haemorrhoids are swollen blood vessels in the anus. Depending on the location of their onset, haemorrhoids can be either external or internal.

1 What are the different types of haemorrhoids?

They can be classified into four distinct degrees of severity. **First degree** haemorrhoids occur within the anal canal without any external visible lump. **Second degree** haemorrhoids get bigger and bulge out during bowel movement. However, the bulge eases once there is no more exertion. **Third degree** haemorrhoids prolapse during bowel movement and stay out of the anal canal for a longer time before gradually getting back in. In this stage, the patient may manipulate the haemorrhoids back to their original position after bowel movement. **Fourth degree** haemorrhoids are at the most advanced stage where they have completely prolapsed out of the rectum, and cannot be pushed back in.

2 Is surgery required for third and fourth degree haemorrhoids?

This would depend on the prevailing symptoms. There is no risk of haemorrhoids turning cancerous, so treatment is only required if they bother you. Often, symptoms of pain or bleeding from third or fourth degree piles can be treated using medication. However, this eases the symptoms, but does not 'cure' the haemorrhoids. However, as long as there is no cause for worry, the haemorrhoids can be left alone.

3 Can haemorrhoids turn cancerous if left untreated for long?

Piles never turn cancerous. They are swollen blood vessels in the anus. Colon or rectal

cancer develop from the inner lining (mucosa) of the colon or rectum.

4 Does sitting on hot temperatures cause haemorrhoids?

The temperature of a surface that one sits on does not cause haemorrhoids, and neither does it affect those who are currently suffering from the condition.

5 Is haemorrhoids an old person's condition?

It is important to note that piles can affect individuals of any age, with triggering factors including excessive straining during bowel movements, chronic diarrhoea and constipation. Women in the later stages of pregnancy or those who have just been through labour may also be afflicted.

6 Can exotic and spicy foods trigger haemorrhoids?

There is no evidence to suggest haemorrhoids can be caused by spicy or exotic foods. However, these foods may upset the stomach which can exacerbate discomfort for those with piles when passing stools. In some cases, such foods can contribute to diarrhoea, which can be painful during a flare-up.

7 How are haemorrhoids treated?

In the absence of symptoms such as bleeding, lumps, itching and pain, haemorrhoids do not require any treatment. However, for first or second degree piles, symptoms can be relieved by exerting less during bowel movement. This could mean consuming more fluids or laxatives to prevent constipation. Oral medication or rectal suppositories may be prescribed by the doctor to relieve the symptoms. If these methods do not help, surgical procedures may be required. 



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