

# Haemorrhoids

## Introduction

This leaflet will give you information about what haemorrhoids are and how they can be treated. A member of staff will discuss everything in this leaflet with you, but if you have any questions, please ask us.

## What are haemorrhoids?

Everyone has swellings in the anal canal (back passage) called anal cushions.

These swellings in the lining of the anal canal act like the washer on a tap and help to prevent leaks from the back passage. Over time these swellings can lose their normal structure and become stretched. This can cause them to bleed, or protrude outside the anus (prolapse). When this happens they are called haemorrhoids or piles. Haemorrhoids can lead to symptoms including bleeding, discomfort, itching and a feeling of not being able to empty your bowel completely. It is not known why some people suffer from haemorrhoids 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 during or after pregnancy and one in three people will suffer from haemorrhoids during their lifetime.

## What are the treatment options for haemorrhoids?

### Banding of haemorrhoids

This procedure occurs at the same time as your clinic appointment and involves using a special instrument to put a very tight elastic band around the base of the haemorrhoid. This cuts off some of the blood supply to the haemorrhoid swelling and fixes the lining of the anal canal in place to prevent further prolapse. The procedure only takes a few minutes to complete. The area heals over during the following three or four weeks.

### Surgical haemorrhoidectomy

This procedure is offered if your haemorrhoids are not able to be treated in the clinic.

Surgical haemorrhoidectomy is performed as a day case as a general anaesthetic is required. The haemorrhoid(s) are surgically removed by cutting the tissue away.

### Pre-assessment appointment

You will receive an appointment for pre-assessment several weeks before your surgery date. This appointment is with a nurse who will ask questions about your general health and any previous surgery that you may have had. This will also

include questions regarding previous anaesthetics. Your blood pressure and pulse rate will also be checked at this visit. Swabs will be taken from your nose and throat for MRSA screening and this is normal. All patients who are admitted to hospital have these swabs done. Depending on your age, general health and medical conditions further tests may be required. As well as getting as full and detailed medical history as we can, it is also an opportunity for information to be given to you about how to make sure you are healthy before your surgery by taking regular walks, increasing your fitness levels and eating a healthy diet. The pre-assessment visit will also enable you to ask any questions in regards to the surgery that you are to have.

**If you do not attend this appointment, your operation will automatically be cancelled.**

### **The day of your surgery**

You will be able to eat and drink normally the day before your surgery until midnight. After midnight, you cannot eat, but you are allowed to drink clear fluids (water, fruit squash, black tea or black coffee) until 6am on the day of your surgery.

You will be asked to come to the Theatre Admissions Unit (TAU) at the back of the hospital at 7.30am. You may have to wait around for several hours as we ask most of our patients on our list to attend at this time. We do this as we may not know until the day of operation how many patients will attend. We try to be as efficient as possible to minimise your wait but sometimes situations arise and we apologise for any delays.

### **Will someone need to accompany me home?**

Yes, you will need to arrange for someone to collect you from hospital after the operation and take you home. You will need to have someone stay with you for 24 hours after your surgery because you have had a general anaesthetic. You will not be allowed to drive or operate any machinery for 24 hours after the operation.

### **What should I do when I get home?**

You may experience some discomfort or a feeling of fullness in the anus for a day or so after the banding/surgery and this is quite normal. You should take regular painkillers (e.g. paracetamol) if needed. If these are not sufficient, you should contact your doctor (GP or surgeon) or pharmacist. Occasionally patients can get more severe pain, and if this occurs you should contact your doctor.

You can bathe or shower as normal and can return to normal activities as soon as you feel able to.

You may see some minor spots of blood on the stools or on the toilet paper when you wipe yourself after opening your bowels but this will settle with time. Patients sometimes get further bleeding around seven to 10 days later and this is due to the 'scab' coming off and the wound healing. It should settle by itself, but if it doesn't, or you lose a large amount of blood or pass clots, you should contact your doctor (GP or surgeon).

## Can I prevent the haemorrhoids from coming back?

Unfortunately, having your haemorrhoids banded or surgically treated does not guarantee that they will never come back. Increasing the fibre in your diet and your fluid intake can help prevent further problems with haemorrhoids. We know that avoiding straining and constipation are the most useful things 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, available from your chemist can help.

## Who can I contact for more information?

If you have a concern or question immediately after you go home, please call the nurses from St. Mark's Outpatients department on 020 8235 4064, Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5.30pm. If you have a query outside these hours, please contact your GP for advice.

If you need advice about your treatment or side effects outside normal working hours, please contact your GP or NHS 111 or in life-threatening circumstances call the emergency services on 999. This will depend on the nature and urgency of your concern.

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## General Trust Information

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is a confidential service for people who would like information, help or advice about the services provided by any of our hospitals. Please note that this service does not provide clinical advice so please contact the relevant department directly to discuss any concerns or queries about your upcoming test, examination or operation.

**If you would like this information in an easy to read format, large print, braille, different format or language, please contact the PALS team on 020 8869 5118 or email [lnwh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:lnwh-tr.PALS@nhs.net). We will do our best to meet your needs.**