

## FACTS ABOUT HEMORRHOIDS

- This pamphlet has been designed by the health professionals of Marquette General Health System to give you some general information about hemorrhoids, which are often referred to as “piles.” After you read this information and discussed it with your health care provider, you should be able to discuss:
  - The signs and symptoms of hemorrhoids
  - Common treatments of hemorrhoids

## WHAT ARE HEMORRHOIDS?

- Hemorrhoids are a group of dilated or swollen blood vessels in the anal canal and lower rectum. Enlargement of the hemorrhoid vessels are usually caused by our natural body posture, standing erect, pregnancy, heredity and straining. It is no longer believed that sedentary occupations, sitting on a hard cold surface or prolonged standing are factors that cause hemorrhoids.
- There are two types of hemorrhoids:
  - Internal hemorrhoids are those inside of the anus and rectum and are covered by the same thin lining as the colon.
  - External hemorrhoids lie on the outside of the anal opening. They develop under this very sensitive skin and feel like soft swellings.

## RECOGNIZE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEMORRHOIDS

- Bleeding-bright painless rectal bleeding on the surface of stool is usually the first symptom of internal hemorrhoids. Blood spots or streaking may also be seen on toilet tissue. Since these symptoms can also signify more serious rectal problems, such as cancer or polyps, your doctor should evaluate all bleeding, however slight.
- Itching-hemorrhoid itching around the anus is common with external hemorrhoids.
- Lump-prolapsed (protrusion) of a small lump (hemorrhoid) may be felt or seen during a bowel movement. These prolapsed hemorrhoids may become extremely painful, making it difficult to sit or pass your stool.

- Pain-thrombosed external hemorrhoids (blood clots within hemorrhoidal veins) may appear as painful lumps outside the anus. Pain is constant and aggravated by sitting or bowel movement. A doctor can remove this by making a small incision under local anesthetic. Discomfort begins to ease in 2-3 days and disappears in about one week. Bleeding may occur from a ruptured clot.

## TREATMENT OF HEMORRHOIDS

- One of the most important measures in treatment of hemorrhoids is a high fiber diet. Fiber retains water, making it easier for stools to pass and minimizing straining.
- Suggested high fiber foods are:
  - Whole fruits
  - Cooked fruits
  - Green leafy vegetables
  - Root vegetables
  - Cooked leafy vegetables
  - Whole grain breads and cereals
  - Dietary supplements such as Metamucil, Naturacil, Fibercon, Citrucel, and others
  - Drink 6-8 8 ounce glasses of water every day
- A daily exercise program is helpful
- Good bowel habits are essential. Don't resist the natural urge to have a bowel movement.
- Don't ever strain or sit for long periods of time on the toilet.
- Exertion, which causes an increase in abdominal pressure, such as weight lifting, may also worsen symptoms.
- The thrombosed external hemorrhoid belongs in an external position and should not be forced into the anal canal. Ointment and suppositories containing anesthetics may give limited relief, but should not be used for more than a day or two. Sitz baths, sitting in warm water for 20 minutes 2-3 times daily, will decrease discomfort due to swelling.
  - Proper hemorrhoidal hygiene is essential after a bowel movement. Make sure to wash the anal area gently, but thoroughly after each bowel movement. Use plain water and do not use soap.

- Hemorrhoidal surgery is done when hemorrhoids are not manageable. A hemorrhoidectomy is a surgical excision or ligation of hemorrhoidal tissue.

Additional health information is available through the MGH Health Information Center (906) 225-4950 or 1-800-562-9753 ext. 4950