

What are Anal Fissures?



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Anal fissures are a very common and benign anorectal issue that affects many of our patients.

Anal fissures are a break or small tear in the skin overlying the anal canal. Typically these occur when people are straining or having difficult to pass or hard stools, though they also can certainly occur without these problems. The symptoms of a fissure are experienced right at the anal opening. Persons will have a sharp or “tearing” pain and also commonly pass small amounts of bright red blood on to the toilet paper.

Many patients will think that they might have hemorrhoids, but while they may also commonly have internal hemorrhoids, it is the fissure that causes the pain.

Treatment includes stool softeners, increased dietary fiber, sitz baths and usually a topical cream that can help to relax the anal sphincter muscle and allow healing. Nitroglycerin, nifedipine or diltiazem ointment might frequently be prescribed, sometimes in combination with a mild topical anesthetic, lidocaine. These are agents which relax the muscles of the anal canal and are effective for healing fissures.

Fissure commonly heal slowly and take 4-6 weeks to completely heal. In a small percentage of patients, anal fissures will become a chronic issue and may require injection of Botox or surgery.