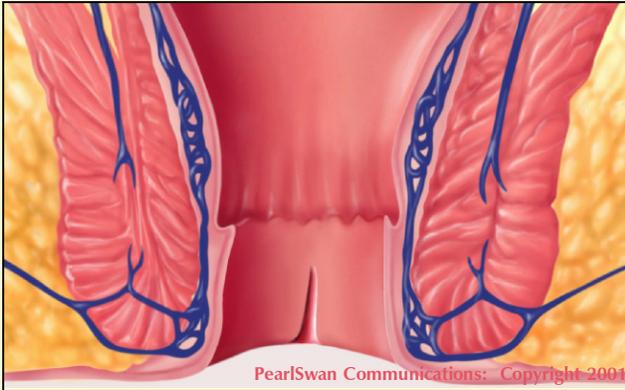


Patient Educational Program

What You Should Know About Fissures



What is a fissure?

Simply put, a fissure is a cut. The problem is that it is in an area that requires constant use. Because the anal canal is richly innervated with sensory pain fibers, a fissure is often very painful.

What causes a fissure?

A fissure is usually caused by a hard stool. This stretches and tears the opening. It is not surprising that it hurts and bleeds.

What can I do to help it heal?

Proper healing depends on 3 therapies:

- (1) Soften the Stool: We use fiber supplements to change stool consistency.
- (2) Protect the Wound: Apply Lidocaine Gel with a Q-tip, up *inside* the anal canal, directly on the fissure *prior* to the bowel movement.
- Use Tucks, or medicated wipes to clean.
- (3) Break the Spasm: Apply Nitroglycerin Cream with a Q-tip. Place a 'dab' of medication *outside* the opening, up to 4 times a day.

It takes months to heal properly. During this time you may have days when it seems healed, only to have a 'bad' bowel movement and a recurrence of symptoms.

Stay on the Program!

When is Surgery considered?

If medical treatment does not work for you, surgery is offered to loosen the opening. It is a good operation with excellent results for most patients. It is done as an outpatient surgery. Post-operative recovery can be painful for the first week or two while you are healing. However, pain can be limited if post-operative instructions are followed properly.

When can I return to work?

Time off of work will depend on your pain threshold, how well you can soften the bowel movement, and what type of work you do.

Can there be complications with surgery?

Although the vast majority of patients are very pleased with the results; The following complications can occur but are not limited to:

- (1) Loss of some control of gas or diarrhea:
The most serious complication is possible loss of some control over flatus (gas), or diarrhea. This is because in order to loosen the opening, one of the muscles that helps control the bowel movement must be partially cut. Most patients do not notice any difference. There is an operation to repair the muscles if necessary.
- (2) The fissure can return:
Occasionally the fissure recurs.
- (3) A tract can form:
The wound can heal with a small 'tract'. This can require another operation to repair.
- (4) Bleeding:
On a rare occasion, a bowel movement can tear the sutures and **Heavy** bleeding can occur. If this happens, apply pressure to the wound and go directly to the Providence Hospital Emergency Room.