



# Student Health Center UNC Wilmington

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: HEMORRHOIDS

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the rectum, much like varicose veins in the legs. If the veins swell too much, clots form inside the veins and the hemorrhoids become inflamed.

Hemorrhoid inflammation causes rectal pain. Pain ranges from itching and burning to intense pain which increases upon defecation. Rectal bleeding can also occur: Bright red blood is seen on the stool or toilet paper. The bleeding is usually small in amount and not serious.

The symptoms of hemorrhoids most often go away within three to five days, even without treatment. Relieving pain is probably the most important part of treatment. Factors which cause hemorrhoids can also be identified and treated. Conditions which are associated with hemorrhoids include constipation, straining at defecation, obesity, pregnancy, and aging.

If pain is severe and doesn't go away with treatment and time, surgery is an option: The veins are cut open to remove the clots.

### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR HEMORRHOIDS:

- 1- Soak your bottom in a warm tub or basin at least three to four times a day. Soak as much as possible (you can't soak too much).
- 2- Pain medication by mouth helps, especially the first few days. Over-the-counter pain medications such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen (Tylenol), or naproxen may suffice, depending on your pain threshold. If the provider prescribes strong pain medication, take the medicine only as directed. Do not take the prescription medicine and perform dangerous activity such as driving, operating machinery, standing on a ladder, etc.
- 3- Various over-the-counter and prescription creams and suppositories are available. Creams can be applied directly to the swollen area and perhaps work better than suppositories. Hydrocortisone cream is available over-the-counter, and can be applied three to four times a day. Avoid "caine" creams as they can cause further irritation.
- 4- Avoid straining to defecate. Take measures to prevent constipation and keep stools soft (pain medicine also tends to constipate). Eat high-fiber foods such as bran, whole wheat, oatmeal, fruits and vegetables. Stool softeners of natural vegetable substances are safe and effective. Look for over-the-counter preparations containing psyllium or methylcellulose. Natural stool softeners work like fiber, increasing bulk of the stools. Realize that these preparations are not "instant" laxatives: They take one-half to three days to soften the stool.
- 5- Make a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral doctor. Schedule a "work-in" appointment within a few days of your the Student Health Center visit. Your doctor can make sure your condition is improving, evaluate the cause of this episode as needed, and help you prevent further episodes.
- 6- Continue long-term measures to prevent a return of inflamed hemorrhoids. Stay on a high-fiber diet to avoid constipation and straining. If you are overweight, reduce. Consider regular exercise such as walking to help regulate your bowels.