

Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are enlarged raised veins in the anus or rectum. They can bleed and become inflamed, often causing pain and itching. Common hemorrhoids are often linked to diarrhea.¹

Although the belief that hemorrhoids are caused by constipation is questioned by researchers,² most doctors feel that many hemorrhoids are triggered by the straining that accompanies chronic constipation.³ Therefore, natural approaches to hemorrhoids sometimes focus on overcoming constipation.

Dietary changes that may be helpful: Countries with high fiber intakes have a very low incidence of hemorrhoids. Double blind research shows that increasing dietary fiber from psyllium seed powder (7 grams taken three times per day) reduces bleeding and pain from hemorrhoids.⁴

Insoluble fiber—the kind found primarily in whole grains and vegetables—increases the bulk of stool. Drinking water with a high-fiber meal or supplement results in softer, bulkier stools, which can move more easily. People with hemorrhoids accompanied by constipation should read about fiber in the section on constipation.

Psyllium husk has also been useful in the treatment of diarrhea.⁵ People with hemorrhoids associated with chronic diarrhea should read the section on diarrhea.

Herbs that may be helpful: Topical use of astringent herbs is a mainstay treatment for hemorrhoids. A leading herb for topical use is witch hazel,⁶ which is typically applied to hemorrhoids three to four times daily in an ointment base. Double blind research suggests horse chestnut extracts are helpful for people with hemorrhoids.⁷ Poor venous circulation, a component of hemorrhoids, can be helped by the internal use of horse chestnut or butcher's broom extracts. Some doctors of natural medicine recommend taking horse chestnut seed extracts standardized for aescin content (16–21%) or isolated aescin preparations at an initial intake of 90–150 mg of aescin per day. Butcher's broom products can also be used in the amount of 1,000 mg two or three times per day. Witch hazel, butcher's broom, and psyllium are approved by the German government for people with hemorrhoids.⁸

Constipation may worsen hemorrhoid symptoms. Bulk-forming laxatives to alleviate constipation are often recommended for those with hemorrhoids. An excellent herbal product is psyllium seeds.⁹ Take 7.5 grams of the seeds (2 teaspoons) or 1 teaspoon of the husks one to two times per day mixed with water or juice. It's important to maintain adequate fluid intake while using psyllium.

Are there any side effects or interactions? Refer to the individual herb for information about any side effects or interactions.

References:

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