

General Surgery

Pruritus Ani: Advice for Patients

The Golden Rules for itchy bottom

What is Pruritus Ani?

Pruritus ani is an intense itching around the back passage (anus). It is a very common condition. The following advice is often helpful in controlling symptoms.

Don't rub or scratch – be gentle with the skin around your bottom. Wipe it gently with soft paper or medicated 'wet wipes' (especially good if you are away from home). Don't rub or scratch when you get itchy (especially at night) – 5 minutes of relief will turn into 50 minutes of agony!

Keep the area clean – wash your bottom with warm water after every bowel movement. Also wash just before going to bed and first thing in the morning. Avoid hot water as this can irritate the skin.

Avoid soaps and shower gels – plain water is all you need to clean the area around your bottom. Using soaps or gels on an itchy bottom can lead to allergies that make the itching worse!

Dry gently – with a soft towel or soft paper. **Do not rub.** A hairdryer on a medium heat is the gentlest way to dry thoroughly.

Avoid moisture – as this will make the itching worse. Keep the area as dry as possible. Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight synthetic (nylon/polyester) clothing. Freely circulating air will help to keep things dry.



Patient Information

Sweat, leakage from your bottom or wet pads can all make things worse. Avoid wearing tights.

Cotton wool pad – if you do tend to get very sweaty or leak a bit from your bottom, then using a small pad of cotton wool against the opening of the anus can absorb the moisture. A three to six centimetre strip of wool should be enough. Change the pad each time you wash.

Avoid perfumed talcum powder – this can cause an allergy and tends to crust together and get stuck in the skin crevices. Non-perfumed is OK, but special drying powders may be better. They can be used with the cotton wool pad.

Avoid ointments and creams – as they all tend to make the skin around the anus soggy and can cause allergies. Occasionally your doctor may prescribe a cream or ointment for a specific reason, but it should be used for a limited duration.

Keep your stools (poo) soft – as hard stools can tear the anal skin. Straining to pass a stool can also make things worse by irritating piles. Spicy foods, tea, coffee, coke, beer, wine and chocolate can all make itchy bottom worse! Sorry! Avoid them if you can.

But not too soft – as after very loose stools it can be difficult to clean your bottom gently and can increase the number of times a day you need to wipe your bottom.

As things improve you can relax this strict routine, but remember to keep the area dry, clean and avoid damaging the skin with rubbing or scratching. If the itching recurs then the Golden Rules should be recommenced immediately till the irritation is controlled.

Further Information

If you have any other questions or would like further information, please call the Colorectal Surgery Team on 024 7696 6102.

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6102 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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