

## **Anal Fissures**

### **What is an anal fissure?**

You have been diagnosed with an anal fissure. A fissure is a break or tear in the lining of the anal canal, most commonly caused by constipation or diarrhea. Fissures are also commonly associated with symptomatic hemorrhoids as at least 20% of hemorrhoid sufferers also have a fissure.

### **Symptoms**

Fissures may cause a variety of symptoms ranging from mild itching (with or without bleeding) to a severe cutting or tearing pain during bowel movements. They may also cause intermittent "flare-ups", which are often blamed on hemorrhoids. The most severe fissures can cause pain for several hours after a bowel movement.

### **Diagnosis**

Your provider may have seen the fissure on inspection of the area but they are more frequently discovered on physical examination. Unfortunately, because of their location in the anal canal, and because so many fissures are partially healed, they often cannot be seen during colonoscopy.

### **Treatment Options**

There are several types of treatments available, both surgical and non-surgical. Surgery is the most effective treatment for fissures, but because of the discomfort and risk of incontinence, it is typical to seek a non-surgical approach first. These treatments include increasing the intake of soluble fiber and water. Most people require 15-20 grams of added dietary fiber daily, obtained by taking a fiber powder or fiber gummies. If this does not soften the stool, ask your provider for additional suggestions as keeping the stool soft and avoiding constipation is extremely important in the healing process.

You may also be prescribed a topical ointment to help heal your fissures. Your pharmacy may not be able to dispense these medications as they have to be compounded, so please ask your provider where to obtain these medications. For any ointment, a pea-sized amount is placed into the anal canal with a gloved finger several times per day for 2-3 months. If you are prescribed topical nitroglycerin ointment, you should be cautioned to not use any erectile dysfunction medications (Cialis, Viagra, etc.) while using the ointment as the combination of medications can cause a dangerous drop in blood pressure.

Try to limit your time on the commode, as prolonged time sitting on the toilet is one of the assumed causes of fissures and hemorrhoids. A warm tub bath or sitz bath may also provide relief while your fissures heal.

If progress is not made, your medications may be changed and/or an injection of Botulinum Toxin ("Botox") may be suggested. Should that fail and you are still symptomatic, surgery can be considered.

### **Fissures and Hemorrhoids**

If you are being seen for your hemorrhoids and have been found to also have a fissure, you may be started on your fissure treatment for a few weeks in order to minimize the risk of post-banding pain. Your provider utilizes the CRH O'Regan System®, which allows for the banding of your symptomatic hemorrhoids with the lowest documented risk for post banding pain.

Please ask your provider for any additional recommendations or instructions necessary to help heal your fissures, and for further information regarding the CRH O'Regan System®, please visit [www.crhsystem.com](http://www.crhsystem.com).

