



PRURITUS ANI

What is pruritus ani and why does it develop?

Pruritus ani is a common, itchy condition that affects the mucous membranes around the anus. It occurs in all ages, but is most common in the fourth, fifth and sixth decades of life. Men are affected more commonly than women are. Although itching may occur at any time, it is often most severe following a bowel movement and at bedtime.

There are many possible causes of pruritus ani including yeast infections, sweat, pinworms, psoriasis, constipation, chronic diarrhea, poor hygiene and fissures. Local irritants such as soaps and perfumes may also cause this condition. The chance of developing this condition increases with stress, diabetes, and excessive sweating. Hemorrhoids do not cause pruritus ani.

How is it treated?

- Before bowel movements, apply a thick layer of Vaseline ointment to the peri-anal area.
- Avoid sitting on the toilet for longer than 5 minutes, if possible.
- After bowel movements, gently clean the area with Cetaphil cleanser (available O.T.C.) and water and pat dry with soft toilet paper.
- Apply a thin layer 1% hydrocortisone cream (available O.T.C.) to the itchy areas after each bowel movement and at bedtime is effective. After the itching improves, try to use the hydrocortisone only 2 or 3 times a week.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Avoid using perfumes/powders on the area.
- If spicy foods, citrus fruits, vitamin C tablets, beer, and coffee seem to make the itching worse, try eliminating them from your diet.