

McLean Hemorrhoid Center®

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What are "internal" and "external" hemorrhoids?...

Hemorrhoids are enlarged veins in the lower end of the rectum just inside the anus. Under certain conditions these veins may become swollen and can actually protrude or prolapse from the anus during a bowel movement. When this occurs the hemorrhoid may become irritated and painful, with occasional bleeding.

"Internal" hemorrhoids are enlarged veins that appear just above the "dentate" line, which is the natural boundary between the mucosal lining of the rectum and the anal skin.

Internal hemorrhoids may look like "external" ones when they are large and protrude through the anus.

"External" hemorrhoids are those that appear below the "dentate" line, protruding through the anal skin layers.

What are the symptoms of hemorrhoids?...

Hemorrhoids can often be felt as a swelling in the area of the anus. The most common symptoms of internal hemorrhoids are soreness, bleeding during a bowel movement, discharge and itching.

External hemorrhoids develop around the anus and can be very painful, especially if a blood clot develops within them. They can be felt as a sensitive, firm lump or lumps around the anus.

What causes hemorrhoids?...

The cause of hemorrhoids is not clear. They are most common after the age of fifty; constipation caused by a low fiber diet may contribute to their appearance. Pregnancy, heavy lifting and straining may have a role also.

Are hemorrhoids preventable?...

Hemorrhoids may be preventable. A diet rich in fluids, fruits, vegetables and fiber [multigrain breads, for instance] contributes to good bowel habits and, possibly, to the avoidance of hemorrhoids, as is regular exercise, including walking or just moving about. It also helps to avoid excessive straining, taking warm baths and spending too much time in the toilet.

How Are Hemorrhoids Treated?...

The treatment of choice for **internal hemorrhoids** at our practice is the application of "Infrared Coagulation" [IRC] by means of a specialized medical device. The application of IRC on the origin of the enlarged vein in the rectum would cause it to close down with a formation of a thin layer of scar tissue, sloughing off in a week or two, when it is eliminated along with a few drops of blood.

The application of IRC does not cause any pain; patients may feel only a slight warm sensation during the procedure.

Internal hemorrhoids could also be treated by "Rubber Band Ligation" if they are fairly **large**. This is a procedure that consists in applying a small rubber band around the enlarged

vein. Left in place, this band would cause the vein to slough off in a week or two, when it is eliminated along with a few drops of blood.

Most **external hemorrhoids** will respond to a conservative treatment of rest and warm sitz baths after the initial episodes; usually, soreness or pain subside within a few days. However, this is a temporary solution; unfortunately, when the hemorrhoid increases in size, the frequency and intensity of the symptoms will also increase.

If external hemorrhoids are not treated, a blood clot may form inside them. This clot feels like a firm lump to the touch. If pain is severe, the treatment would include making a small incision under local anesthesia and removing the clot, providing immediate relief.

By the time a patient consults for external hemorrhoids, they are usually fairly large, and they may not be treatable at the doctor's office. In this situation, the patient may need to be admitted to a hospital where a surgeon would remove them under anesthesia.

Are there complications after treatments?...

Both treatments, infrared coagulation and rubber band ligation of hemorrhoids, are very safe and generally do not cause complications. Rubber band ligation may cause occasional soreness and mild discomfort after its application; however, the use of an anesthetic ointment applied to the treated area brings immediate relief. These symptoms disappear after the remaining vein is eliminated in one to two weeks.

How many treatments are required to treat hemorrhoids?...

The number of treatments depends on the type, number and size of the hemorrhoids. Usually, for multiple hemorrhoids, three to four separate treatments would be required. It is advisable to wait from ten to fourteen days between treatments; this time would allow for proper healing of the treated tissues.

Would the hemorrhoids come back?...

Hemorrhoids treated with either infrared coagulation or rubber band ligation do not generally recur. New ones may appear if, for instance, constipation is not resolved, and a proper diet with enough fiber is not adopted...

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