

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH ANAL FISSURES

Fissures are a tear or crack in the tissue that lines the anal opening. They may be quite painful and tend to bleed with bowel movements. For that reason, it is important to keep the stool soft to avoid continually irritating and re-tearing the fissure as it heals. Because stool must pass by this area, fissures take time to heal, usually four to six weeks. The following treatment plan is designed to help the fissure heal and hopefully avoid surgical therapy.

DIET:

Eat a regular diet. Avoid foods that constipate you or give you diarrhea. Avoid foods that are extremely spicy, contain seeds, nuts, corn, and popcorn, as they are hard to digest and may cause further irritation to the fissure. Drink six to eight glasses of water each day in addition to your meals. Avoid beverages with caffeine or alcoholic beverages as they may further dry out the stool.

MEDICATION:

Take an Extra Strength Tylenol or Advil as directed on the package label. Stronger pain medication or narcotics are constipating and may further aggravate the situation. Use creams or ointments as directed by the doctor. Wear a small piece of 100% cotton next to the anal opening to keep the medication close to the fissure and avoid getting it on your clothing.

Be sure to use 100% cotton: rayon or other synthetic cotton will irritate the skin. Take a fiber supplement such as Metamucil or Citrucel to keep the stool soft.

PERIANAL CARE:

A lot of the pain of the fissure is due to the muscle spasm which is triggered when the fissure is irritated. As mentioned above, an over-the-counter pain medication will help.

Sitz Baths (sitting in a tub of comfortably warm water) for 20 minutes will help to relieve some of the muscle spasm. This should also be done immediately after your bowels move. You may sit on a heating pad (on the low to medium setting) if you find that it helps. Some prefer an ice pack.

