Anal Pruritis

Anal *pruritis* (itching) is often due to increased moisture of the skin around the anus. This results in itching and scratching. This causes further skin damage. Hemorrhoids, infections, and other anal diseases may lead to itching. There may be no clear cause. Poor local hygiene will usually cause itching. Perfumed soaps and sprays can also lead to anal irritation. Dietary factors such as caffeine (coffee, black teas, colas), beer, milk products, chocolate, nuts, citrus fruits, tomatoes, spicy seasonings, jalapeno peppers and salsa may cause problems.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Treatment includes good hygiene.
- You should clean the anal area with a moist tissue, cotton, or cloth after every bowel movement and at bedtime. **Avoid using soaps on the anal area. Take sitz baths in warm water for 15-20 minutes 2-3 times daily.** Be sure to dry the skin around the anus very well with a hair dryer or soft cloth after each bath.
- Zinc oxide ointment or Calmoseptine can be applied several times daily to protect the skin. Applying topical cortisone creams and avoiding the above mentioned foods will be helpful if food allergy is part of the problem. Medicines to treat infections and reduce itching should be used as prescribed.
- Fiber supplements (Metamucil, Citrucil) are helpful in normalizing the stool for those with frequent, loose stools.
- It is best to wear all-cotton underwear. You may place a small strip of cotton material to the anal area to help absorb the extra drainage and moisture; this should be changed several times daily.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Problems are not improved in several days or are getting worse.
- Other members of your family develop a similar problem.
- There are problems with fever or increased pain, swelling, or redness.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 11/30/2009
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