Everything You Need to Know About Menopause Hemorrhoids

by AFRA WILLMORE

Menopause Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are, quite literally, a pain in the butt. You may have suffered from them on and off throughout your life, especially if you have been pregnant. Or, you may have been lucky and avoided them until now as you go through the perimenopause and menopause years. If that is the case, what is causing your rear-end issues now, and is there anything you can do about menopause hemorrhoids?

I've gathered lots of information, partly from research and partly (sadly) from personal experience to help you learn more about menopause hemorrhoids and how to deal with or avoid them. I really do feel your pain!

What Are Hemorrhoids?

If you have ever been brave enough to peek underneath, you may well have worked out what hemorrhoids are. They are a bit like varicose veins — basically they are swollen veins inside your rectum or protruding from your anus. They may be red or purple and may or may not burn, itch or bleed.

They are common, with about half the population having some form at some point in their life, but few people talk about their experience apart from making jokes. However, anyone who has truly suffered knows living with hemorrhoids can be anything but funny.

How Do You Know if You Have Hemorrhoids?

Internal hemorrhoids are usually painless, as there are very few pain-sensing nerves in the rectum, but tend to bleed. The first sign you might notice is blood in your poop or bright, red stains on the toilet paper when you wipe after a bowel movement. You might also feel like you still need to poop after you have been to the toilet.

External hemorrhoids may cause pain, itching or general discomfort, especially when going to the toilet. It may be difficult and uncomfortable to wipe the area clean efficiently after a bowel movement because of the lumps or swollen veins. You may even find you become constipated, as you are consciously or subconsciously avoiding having a poo because you are anticipating difficulty and pain. This can become a vicious cycle, as one of the prime causes of hemorrhoids is constipation.

What Causes Hemorrhoids During Menopause?

I mentioned previously that many women (including me) develop hemorrhoids during pregnancy because of the weight and position of the baby putting pressure on the rectum and anal area, which increases blood flow and the size of veins. The hormone changes in pregnancy also have a big effect.

Hormones are also villains when it comes to hemorrhoids in menopause, and for many women, this will be their first experience of this tiresome, embarrassing condition. Hormonal and physical changes during perimenopause

and menopause can also trigger gastrointestinal problems, like constipation or diarrhea, which increases the chance of developing hemorrhoids.

Whatever your grandma might have told you, you cannot develop piles or make them worse by sitting on cold or wet walls, benches or chairs outdoors. It just might not be very comfortable!

Can You Avoid Developing Hemorrhoids?

Prevention is better than a cure, and there are some simple measures you can take if you are prone to hemorrhoids or are worried you might develop them.

- **Eat plenty of fiber.** Choose wholegrain bread, rice and noodles and fresh fruit and vegetables (preferably with the skin on when possible, as that is often where most fiber is). Choose high-fiber breakfast cereals, and try and incorporate pulses like lentils, beans and chickpeas into your recipes. Maybe enjoy a potato with baked beans for a tasty, high-fiber meal.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Preferably, stick to water, which can be still or sparkling. Try and avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks, as these can cause constipation, increasing your risk of menopause hemorrhoids.
- **Don't sit for too long on the toilet.** Don't read books or play games when you go to the bathroom — just do your business.
- **Don't ignore the urge to poop.** Listen to your body. If you have to relieve yourself, then do so. If you hold it in, it can cause constipation, and do not strain too hard when you do need to go.
- **Avoid or limit using painkillers.** This is especially true for ones containing codeine, as it can cause constipation.

Is There a Cure for Hemorrhoids?

So, despite your best efforts, menopause hormones have done their worst and you have developed hemorrhoids. Luckily, there are a few ways to help ease the discomfort and potentially even completely get rid of hemorrhoids.

Sometimes they just disappear on their own, but if they last more than seven days, it is time to think about consulting your doctor. In the meantime, wipe gently with damp toilet paper and blot with dry, good-quality toilet paper.

Take paracetamol to ease any pain (not ibuprofen as that can make bleeding worse). If the pain and itching is bothering you, try taking a warm (not hot) bath with plain (not perfumed) Epsom salts. This is best done for 20 minutes after each bowel movement.

You can wrap an ice block in an old towel and place it in the area where the hemorrhoids are hurting to ease pain and itching. Some people swear by using frozen peas, which mold themselves in all the right places! You might not want to eat the partly-defrosted peas afterwards though, so mark them with a permanent marker so they are clearly for medical relief only.

You could ask a pharmacist about over-the-counter products which can help with pain, itching and swelling. I found a spray product which really helped without me having to actually touch the area. You can buy medication in cream, spray, gel and lotion form for external hemorrhoids and in suppository form for internal piles. There are products using only a blend of natural products if you prefer that way of dealing with things.

Other natural remedies include witch hazel, which you can use on soft cotton pads as a wipe or pure Aloe Vera gel can both soothe.

You could try gently pushing minor piles you have just noticed back inside but if the piles are really protruding, hurting or bleeding, it is best to see a doctor who may try to do this for you.

In Conclusion

Although common, it is important to get hemorrhoids checked by a doctor if they last longer than seven days and do not respond to over-the-counter treatment there may be stronger medication available on prescription, or in rare cases, surgery may be required.

Hemorrhoids are a minor issue. With plenty of fluids and fiber, your toilet habits can crawl back where they came from.