



PEAK
DEVELOPMENT
RESOURCES LLC

Peak Development for ...
Home Health Aides®

Vol. 18 Issue 1

January 2017

Hemorrhoids: Providing Relief

Peak Development Resources, LLC
P.O. Box 13267
Richmond, VA 23225

Phone: (804) 233-3707
Fax: (804) 233-3705
Email: editor@peakdev.com

Peak Development for... Home Health Aides® and *Competency Assessment Tool for Home Health Aides®* are components of a site license for the Peak Development Resources Competency Assessment System for Home Health Aides® and may be reproduced for this individual facility only. Sharing of these components with any other freestanding facility within or outside the licensee's corporate entity is expressly prohibited.

The information contained in *Peak Development for... Home Health Aides* is intended only as a guide for the practice of home health aides supervised by licensed personnel. It is the responsibility of the reader to understand and adhere to policies and procedures set forth by the employing institution. The editor and publisher of this newsletter disclaim any liability resulting from use or misuse of information contained herein. Professional guidance from licensed personnel should be sought.

Copyright © 2017

After reading the newsletter, the home health aide should be able to:

1. Identify the causes and risk factors for development of hemorrhoids.
2. Describe the types of hemorrhoids and signs/symptoms.
3. Discuss treatment and care for relief of discomfort due to hemorrhoids.

Hemorrhoids, also called piles, are the most common disorder affecting the rectum and anus. Symptoms of hemorrhoids affect approximately 5% of the adult population in the US and more than half of people aged 50 and over. This condition can cause significant discomfort and reduced quality of life for those affected.



This newsletter will provide an overview of hemorrhoids, including what they are, how they develop, and common signs and symptoms. Medical treatment and measures to relieve inflammation and discomfort will also be covered.

What are Hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are a normal part of human anatomy. They are groups of blood vessels, covered in mucous membrane, muscle and/or skin, that are located in the rectum and anus. The rectum is the end portion of the large intestine, and the anus is the opening where the stool exits the body. Everyone has these structures called hemorrhoids, but it is only when these blood vessels become swollen and inflamed that people notice their presence and refer to them as hemorrhoids.

The two major types of hemorrhoids are internal and external. A person may have both types of hemorrhoids at the same

time. Internal hemorrhoids form inside the rectum. They are covered in the same mucous membrane that lines the rectum. This membrane does not have a lot of nerve endings, so the surface of this type of hemorrhoid is not usually painful to touch. They may cause an aching sensation, however. Although internal hemorrhoids develop up in the rectum, they may be pushed down through the anus and be visible on the outside. They often appear as a reddish, grape-like mass protruding from the anus. They may have a moist appearance, due to the mucous membranes covering them.

External hemorrhoids develop at the anus, and commonly appear as a skin-covered bulge or lump at the anal opening, or sphincter. They are covered in the same skin that covers this area. This skin has a lot of nerve endings, so external hemorrhoids may be very sensitive to touch and may cause a lot of pain.

Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause of why some people develop hemorrhoids and others do not is not clearly known. There are, however, a variety of factors that may be associated with the development of hemorrhoids:

Age: With increasing age, the supportive structures in the intestine tend to weaken, allowing the hemorrhoids to bulge.

Blood flow: Changes in blood flow

to the rectal area can cause the vessels to become swollen and engorged. This may occur during pregnancy, when the growing uterus slows blood flow in the lower body parts. It can also occur with prolonged sitting in a chair or on the toilet. Straining may also cause engorgement of vessels, such as when picking up a heavy object or bearing down to have a bowel movement. For this reason, constipation and diarrhea tend to be associated with development of hemorrhoids. Therefore, people with chronic constipation or diarrhea due to inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis, are at increased risk. Obesity is also thought to increase the risk of hemorrhoids.



Genetics: Having others in the family with hemorrhoids may increase the risk of developing them.

Signs and Symptoms

General symptoms of hemorrhoids often include burning, itching, throbbing, aching, and the feeling that a mass or lump is present. There may also be bright red bleeding from the anus. The bleeding often occurs when hard stool causes trauma to the swollen vessels of either internal or external hemorrhoids. The bleeding may appear as a small amount on the toilet tissue, or small amounts may drip or squirt into the toilet with bowel movements. Hemorrhoids do not usually produce hemorrhage or significant blood loss.

In most cases, the discomfort of hemorrhoids is mild to moderate. However, if complications occur with hemorrhoids, severe pain may result. Internal hemorrhoids commonly prolapse out of the anus. But, if they are strangulated by the anal sphincter muscles and their blood supply is cut off, this can cause tissue death and severe pain. With external hemorrhoids, a clot, or thrombosis, may form in the vessel, cutting off its circulation and causing severe pain. In these cases, the hemorrhoids may appear very swollen and bluish in color.

Treatment and Care

The majority of hemorrhoid cases can be successfully treated without medical or surgical procedures. In most cases, improvement may occur by increasing fiber and fluids in the diet. This helps to keep the stool soft and easy to expel, and reduces trauma to the hemorrhoids and straining. A stool softener may also be ordered. Daily walking or other exercise also helps to prevent constipation and straining. If fatty or spicy foods cause irritation, the client should avoid these.

Having the client sit in a bath of warm water helps to reduce the swelling and discomfort of hemorrhoids, and relaxes the anal sphincter. Sitz baths that require prolonged sitting on the toilet should be avoided, as this may impair circulation and make inflammation worse. A cold pack/ice pack applied to the area for 15-minute periods may also help. Topical medications applied to the hemorrhoids may be ordered to reduce swelling, such as steroid creams, anesthetic creams or gels (such as lidocaine), and over-the-counter products, such as witch hazel (Tucks pads) or hemorrhoid creams (Preparation H).

Hemorrhoids that appear on the outside of the body, whether internal or external, can cause difficulties with maintaining hygiene. They can cause stool or mucous to be deposited on the skin around the anus, causing irritation, skin breakdown and possible infection. Therefore, gentle and thorough cleansing of the area after each bowel movement is very important. Soothing, moist wipes should be used to gently clean around the anus, making sure that no stool is left in the crevices around the hemorrhoids. If a cream has been ordered to protect the skin from irritation, this should be applied after cleansing. Of course, gloves should be used to maintain standard precautions when assisting a client with elimination and hygiene.

To help reduce the inflammation and discomfort from hemorrhoids, positions and activities that worsen them should be minimized. The client should be advised not to sit for prolonged periods, especially on the toilet. Lifting or pushing heavy objects should be avoided, as well as any other activities that cause straining. Maintaining a healthy body weight may also help to prevent or improve hemorrhoids.



If medical or surgical treatment is needed, there are several options. Internal hemorrhoids are commonly treated with a non-surgical banding procedure called rubber band ligation. A rubber band is applied around the hemorrhoid, cutting off the blood supply. This causes the tissue to die and slough off. Surgery may be required for large, prolapsed internal hemorrhoids or thrombosed external hemorrhoids. Surgery may be performed using a scalpel, electrical surgical techniques or laser. A stapling procedure may also be used for internal hemorrhoids that removes excess tissue and secures remaining tissue to the rectal wall.

Proper attention and care can significantly improve the comfort and quality of life for clients with hemorrhoids.



Hemorrhoids: Providing Relief

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Directions: Place the letter of the one best answer in the space provided.

- ____ 1. Internal hemorrhoids are never seen on the outside of the body.
A. True
B. False

- ____ 2. Which types of hemorrhoids are covered in skin and are very sensitive to touch?
A. external
B. internal
C. both internal and external
D. neither internal nor external

- ____ 3. A person may have either internal or external hemorrhoids, but not both types.
A. True
B. False

- ____ 4. Factors that increase the risk of hemorrhoids include:
A. lifting heavy objects
B. prolonged sitting
C. constipation or diarrhea
D. all of the above

- ____ 5. Hemorrhoids tend to develop more commonly in people who are:
A. pregnant
B. under age 40
C. underweight
D. all of the above

- _____ 6. Bleeding from hemorrhoids typically appears as:
- A. dark, tarry stools
 - B. significant hemorrhage with major blood loss
 - C. small amounts of bright red bleeding
 - D. none of the above, hemorrhoids do not cause bleeding
- _____ 7. Hygiene measures for hemorrhoids should include which of the following?
- A. avoid any cleaning after bowel movements, to prevent trauma
 - B. use dry toilet tissue to firmly remove stool from the area
 - C. instead of wiping, leave folded toilet tissue against the hemorrhoids
 - D. use moist wipes to gently clean stool from the area
- _____ 8. Most people with hemorrhoids require surgery to correct them.
- A. True
 - B. False
- _____ 9. Which of the following measures helps to decrease the inflammation of hemorrhoids?
- A. sitting on the toilet for long periods until a bowel movement occurs
 - B. decreasing the amount of fluids taken in daily
 - C. increasing the amount of fiber taken in daily
 - D. avoiding walking, which aggravates hemorrhoids
- _____ 10. Internal hemorrhoids may be treated by which of the following?
- A. rubber band ligation
 - B. surgery
 - C. stapling
 - D. all of the above

