

## PRURITIS ANI

### **What is *pruritis ani*?**

Itching around the anal area, called *pruritis ani*, is a common condition. The itching may be intractable. This is usually most noticeable and bothersome at night or after bowel movements.

### **What causes this to happen?**

Several factors may cause *pruritis*. Moisture around the anus from excessive sweating or from moist, stools is one possible causative factor. In some people, a high intake of liquids can cause a loose, irritating stool. Other possible causes or contributing factors include pinworms, psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, hemorrhoids, anal fissures or anal infections.

### **Does this come from not keeping my anal area clean enough?**

This is almost never a factor. However, the natural tendency is to wash the area vigorously and frequently with soap and a washcloth. These activities almost always aggravate the problem by damaging the skin and washing away protective oils.

### **How can a doctor determine what is causing the itching in my case?**

A careful examination may show a definite cause for the itching, in which case treatment can be directed specifically to eliminate the problem.

### **What can be done to resolve the itch?**

There are 4 parts to a treatment program:

#### **1. AVOID FURTHER TRAUMA**

- a. Do not use soap of any kind on the anal area
- b. Do not scrub the anal area with anything, even toilet paper, and avoid rubbing
- c. For hygiene, use wet toilet paper and blot the area clean, do not rub.

LOS ANGELES

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- d. Try not to scratch the itching area; it can lead to more damage and aggravate the itching.
2. USE 1% HYDROCORTISONER CREAM as prescribed. Apply this *sparingly* to the skin around the anal area three times a day using the finger tip.
3. AVOID MOISTURE in the anal area.
  - a. Use either a few wisps of cotton or some corn starch to keep the area dry.
  - b. Avoid all medicated, perfumed and deodorant powders.
4. AVOID EXCESSIVE FLUID IN THE DIET
  - a. A maximum of six glasses of fluid a day is reasonable. There normally is no health benefit to drinking more fluid than this in the course of a day.

### How long does this treatment usually take?

Most people experience improvement within a week when they follow the instructions outlined above. Although these symptoms almost always disappear within 3 to 4 weeks, some patients may need treatment for a longer period of time, or may need to repeat these steps from time to time for recurrent symptoms.