

Haemorrhoidectomy (removal of piles)

Introduction

We know that you are currently experiencing a long wait for your haemorrhoidectomy and that this can be very difficult.

We have developed this advice and information to help support you whilst you wait. It is designed to help you manage your symptoms and condition and to prevent these from getting worse. It is also to help you prepare for your surgery.

This guide has been written by the national experts in haemorrhoidectomy and draws on the latest evidence and advice about how best to support people waiting for your procedure.

You can download and print this support guide and share with your family, friends and carers.

Guidance for Patients

Your surgeon has recommended that you have a haemorrhoidectomy (an operation to remove your piles). This is the most effective treatment for your condition, but there are ways of managing your symptoms while you wait for surgery.

If your piles are causing itching around the bottom, there are some simple things you can do to help. Firstly, use simple soap and shower gel without any colours or perfumes as these can make the skin itchier. Wearing cotton underwear allows the skin to breathe and keeps the skin dry. Ensure that you keep your bottom clean and dry.

You can use piles creams from the chemist but take care to read the instructions and don't use them for more than 2 weeks at a time. If your piles come out of the bottom when you open your bowels, it may help to get them pushed back inside. If you are bleeding, then some gauze or a sanitary pad can be used in the back of your underwear to protect your clothes.

Sitting in a shallow bath filled with warm water may help reduce swelling of piles and ease any discomfort.

Both constipation and diarrhoea can make piles symptoms worse. If you are constipated this can mean that you are straining which can make piles symptoms worse. If this happens to you, it is worth taking some laxatives to keep your stools soft and make it easier to go. Softening laxatives such as lactulose are usually the best type to take. Ask your pharmacist for advice if you are unsure what to take. If your poo is too soft or you are opening your bowels too often, this can also make piles symptoms worse. You can improve your bowel habit by avoiding spicy food and drinks containing caffeine (such as tea or coffee).

Getting ready for your operation

It is important while you are waiting for surgery that you keep as fit and healthy as you can. This will improve the success of surgery and reduce the chance that your operation is cancelled. Maintaining a balanced diet and a healthy weight can also help. The NHS lose weight resource also has lots of support available including a free 12-week weight loss plan.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your general health, and it will also help you recover better from your operations, so can drinking less alcohol.

Exercise is important for health and if you can be more active then this can reduce the risks of surgery. Try to take a walk for at least 30 mins three times a week.

If you have diabetes, you need to take care to keep your blood sugar levels under control. If you are struggling, then please contact your practice nurse or diabetes nurse specialist for help. High blood pressure (or hypertension) increases the risks of surgery and is a common reason for cancelling planned operations. If you are over 50, it is good idea to get your blood pressure checked. You get this done at many pharmacies or by your practice nurse. If you are being treated for high blood pressure you should have your blood pressure checked every few months.

If your symptoms have improved while you have been waiting, surgery may no longer be the best option for you. Please contact the surgical team at your hospital to discuss if this is the case.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

In most people, piles symptoms are a nuisance and are not serious. Rarely, if piles bleed a lot, they can cause anaemia (a low blood count). If you are bleeding a lot and you feel really tired or short of breath, then you should contact your GP's surgery to have a blood test to check for anaemia. If you are anaemic, you may need you have further tests and take some iron supplements.

If you are bleeding a lot in one go and you feel unwell, then you should call NHS 111, as this may need urgent investigation.

If your piles get stuck out and are very painful, you can treat this with an ice pack (wrapped in a towel) to shrink the piles and let them go back inside. Take some simple pain killers (such as paracetamol) too. If this does not work and your pain does not get better, then you should call NHS 111

Where can I find additional information?

- **NHS quitting smoking support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/
- **Centre for Perioperative Care:** www.cpoc.org.uk/patients
- **NHS drink less support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/
- **NHS lose weight support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/
- **The Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI) support for patients:** www.acpgbi.org.uk/patients/
- **NHS haemorrhoids information:** www.nhs.uk/piles-haemorrhoids/