Dear Alice:

A friend told me that bathroom reading caused hemorrhoids. Is this true?

Thanks for your attention,
The reader

Answer

Dear The reader,

Friends, although a common source of advice and information, don't always hit the proverbial nail on the head. Hemorrhoids, or piles, are enlarged veins in the lower rectum and anus. Hemorrhoids sometimes occur outside the anus and are visible. At other times, they occur inside the rectum and they're not visible to the naked eye. While bathroom reading itself may not cause hemorrhoids, sitting for long periods of time on the toilet can cause them.

There is no single cause of hemorrhoids, although they can develop from increased pressure in the lower rectum due to:

- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Sitting on the toilet for long periods of time
- Pregnancy
- Low-fiber diets
- Anal sex
- Regular heavy lifting
- Chronic diarrhea or constipation

In thinking about your friend's advice, it's possible that your friend misconstrued the literal act of bathroom reading with sitting on the toilet for long periods of time, straining to have a bowel movement, which CAN contribute to hemorrhoids. This can be the case with anything that may cause someone to sit on the toilet for a long period of time, be it constipation, crosswords, or even playing on their phones.
Bleeding during bowel movements or hemorrhoids that don't improve after a week of home care are two indicators that professional medical assistance may be needed. Health care providers can discuss options for treatment as well as strategies to prevent hemorrhoids from developing in the first place.

The related Q&As may be able to shed some more light on hemorrhoids. And with this new found knowledge, you may want to take a turn to inform your informative friend. Long story, short: if you're looking to dig into a long book, you may be better served sitting in an armchair rather than the porcelain throne.

Happy reading!

Alice!
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