

Treatment for hemorrhoids ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What medication can be used on a bleeding hemorrhoid?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Hemorrhoids, especially bleeding ones, are certainly no picnic. Luckily, treatment options for hemorrhoids are varied and relatively easy to obtain. Over-the-counter medications containing witch hazel or hydrocortisone are popular go-tos for hemorrhoid relief, and surgical options exist if these drugstore remedies don't rectify the situation. Further, there are steps that can be taken to prevent them from developing in the first place.

Hemorrhoids are one of the most common and highly treatable ailments afflicting adults. They're caused by swollen and inflamed veins around the anus and lower rectum. The presence of blood associated with hemorrhoids, typically bright red and noticeable following a bowel movement, usually indicates excess irritation and is one of the most common signs of internal hemorrhoids. However, rectal bleeding may also be indicative of other digestive diseases, including colorectal cancer and anal cancer, so it's wise to tell your health care provider if you experience any bleeding.

Medications and treatment options for hemorrhoids are usually fairly simple and may be used in the comfort and privacy of your own home. For mild hemorrhoids, over-the-counter ointments, suppositories, creams, or pads containing witch hazel or hydrocortisone can be effective treatments. Also, keeping the anal area clean and free of excess moisture, soaking in a warm bath, and applying a cold compress to reduce swelling are more at-home tactics for relief. If hemorrhoid irritation persists or worsens, some minimally invasive procedures may be suggested and performed by your health care provider. This might include rubber band ligation (which essentially strangles a hemorrhoid by cutting off its circulation), injections of a shrinking chemical agent into the hemorrhoid site, and laser and infrared treatments that cause hemorrhoids to shrink. These options are a last resort that are usually pursued after simpler, over-the-counter medications were ineffective.

Some simple prevention measures may also help stave off hemorrhoids. Since hemorrhoids are caused by irritation during bowel movements, keeping your stool soft will help prevent hemorrhoids. Eating high-fiber foods, such as vegetables, raw fruits, and whole grains, and drinking plenty of fluids will help maintain an even flow. To that end, you may also want to consider fiber supplements as part of your hemorrhoid prevention routine. Finally, being physically active has been shown to reduce hemorrhoid incidence, as well as avoiding excess strain and fatigue. For more information on hemorrhoid relief and prevention, you can check out [MedlinePlus](#) [2].

Alice!

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