

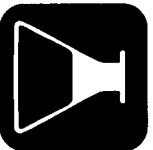
The Palo Alto Medical Foundation

was created in 1981 by expanding the non-profit Palo Alto Medical Research Foundation to encompass health care (the Palo Alto Medical Clinic partnership) and medical and health education (under a new Education Division). The idea is to build on the excellence we have in the areas of research and health-care delivery and explore new ways to hold down medical costs while providing better medical care, patient services, and research.

Because the Palo Alto Medical Foundation is a Non Profit Organization, donations are tax deductible. If you can make a directed donation of equipment or money through the foundation, please speak to me about it. Much of my computer and publishing equipment has been donated by generous patients.



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A What?

A FISSURE is tear or crack in the skin at the anal opening. It is caused by passing hard constipated stools or by a local irritation to the area such as a long trip or heavy exercise. A fissure is usually associated with pain and bleeding at the time of a bowel movement. It has nothing to do with a tumor or cancer. There is no direct association with hemorrhoids.

Medical Treatment

Medical management is the initial treatment of most fissures and usually results in healing the fissure within several weeks. Medical treatment consists of three parts. By far the most important is to soften the stools with bulk formers, bran, and a proper diet. This is outlined in detail in the following sections. Next, it is important to help relax the muscles of the anus with a sitz bath several times a day. This is nothing more than simply soaking in the bathtub. The water should be just comfortably warm. No additives are necessary. Be sure to rinse off any soap. Finally a topical cream with a combination of antibiotic and cortisone is applied to the area.

Surgical Treatment

Surgical treatment is used only if the medical management fails after several weeks. The surgery involves excising (removing) the fissure and relaxing the muscles of the anal canal. Removing the fissure gets rid of the old scar tissue and provides fresh healthy new tissue to heal properly. Relaxing the muscle is important to decrease the spasm with bowel movements and to decrease the resting tension on the fissure site. This is also thought to increase the local blood & oxygen supply to help improve

healing. Note that the muscle relaxed is an involuntary one. Most patients have little awareness that it was relaxed, and there is little if any change in voluntary control of bowel movements. Frequently passing gas per rectum is more relaxed. After surgery, sitz baths and the same cream are again used.

Fiber

Fiber is that portion of the dietary intake that is not absorbed; it is usually in the form of cellulose. One of the highest fiber items is the outer covering of any cereal grain, the bran. Certain vegetable and fruits are also relatively high in fiber. Milk and milk products, chicken, fish, meat, eggs, fats, and beverages have no fiber. The highest fiber content in vegetables is in the legumes (beans). Over the counter preparations containing psyllium include *Hydrocil*, *Konsyl*, *Metamucil*, and *Fibercon*. Adding one of these preparations to juice or a glass of water is an easy and effective fiber supplement to the diet.

Function

Fiber in foods performs an important function. Because it can absorb several times its weight in water, fiber results in softer, bulkier stools which aid bowel function and help control constipation. Researchers believe that a high-fiber diet reduces the risk of hemorrhoids and diverticulitis. It would be difficult to eat too much fiber, especially if you are simply replacing refined, processed food with whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

General information

In general try to increase your intake of bulk cereals, whole wheat products, cooked vegetables, fruits, and lean meats. Eat 1/2 cup or

more of a bran cereal at breakfast and at bedtime. Use only small amounts of liquor, beer, wine, butter, and sweets.

Foods to avoid

Avoid those foods containing modern refined flour such as white bread, sourdough bread, French bread, English muffins, and soda crackers. Avoid fatty, acid, and spicy foods, especially containing tomato products and garlic, such as spaghetti, chili, and pizza. Red wines will aggravate some fissures.

Foods recommended

Work especially hard to increase your intake of bran type cereals such as Bran Buds, All-Bran, unprocessed bran, 100% bran, Shredded Wheat, and oatmeal. Use wheat germ, wild rice, buckwheat, cornmeal, millet, rice bran, and whole wheat. Eat cooked vegetables and potatoes. Eat raw fruits including skins, such as apples, figs, apricots, peaches, pears, plums, bananas, and berries. Use dried fruits including apricots, figs, pears, prunes, dates, currants, and raisins. Use raw vegetables such as cauliflower, carrots, celery, lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, radishes, mushrooms, cabbage. Steamed vegetables in small amounts of water such as artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, and all leafy "greens." Boiled or poached eggs, not fried. Soups except onion. Desserts including Jello, puddings, sherbert, plain cookies, pound cake. Beverages including tea, cocoa, Tang, limited amounts of carbonated drinks.

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A high fiber diet produces a large, bulky stool that requires less "effort" by the bowel to propel. Muscular hypertrophy does not occur, the pressure in the bowel is less, and diverticula are less likely to develop. Soft stool is also less likely to become trapped in those diverticula already present.

FUNCTION

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DISEASES

Researchers believe that a high-fiber diet reduces the risk of hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, and cancer. The soft, bulky stool produced by a high fiber diet is less irritating to the colon, rectum, and anus. It decreases the symptoms of spastic colitis (irritable bowel).

GENERAL INFORMATION

In general, try to increase your intake of bulk cereals, whole wheat products, cooked vegetables, fruits, and lean meats. Avoid fatty, acid, and spicy foods. Eat 1/2 cup or more of a bran cereal at breakfast and at bedtime. Use only small amounts of liquor, beer, wine, butter, and sweets.

FOODS TO AVOID

Avoid those foods containing modern refined flour such as white bread, sourdough bread, French bread, English muffins, and soda crackers. Avoid fried foods, fatty foods, and oils. Caffeinated coffee, whole milk, and strongly flavored cheese may be bowel irritants in some patients. *For diverticulitis, void all nuts, popcorn, and seeds.*

FOODS RECOMMENDED

Work especially hard to increase your intake of bran-type cereals such as Bran Buds, Bran Flakes, All-Bran, unprocessed bran, 100% bran, Shredded Wheat, or oatmeal. Use wheat germ, wild rice, buckwheat, cornmeal, millet, rice bran, and whole wheat. Eat cooked vegetables and potatoes. Eat raw fruits including skins, such as apples, figs, apricots, peaches, pears, plums, bananas, and berries. Use dried fruits including apricots, figs, pears, prunes, dates, currants, and raisins. Use raw vegetables such as cauliflower, carrots, celery, lettuce, spinach, tomatoes, radishes, mushrooms, cabbage. Steam vegetables in small amounts of water such as artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and all leafy "greens."

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Avoid overeating, get plenty of rest. Do not skip meals. Warm foods and drinks promote regularity. Cold fluids slow the bowel down and promote constipation. If a diet is followed for a long period of time, a daily multiple vitamin is recommended. Several weeks are required to see major changes in your bowel pattern.