

- Wash underwear in non-biological washing powder and make sure they are thoroughly rinsed.

### Bowel habit

- Try to develop a regular bowel habit.
- A diet high in fibre makes the stools softer and more likely to leak out and also more difficult to wipe properly afterwards. If you find this is the case then moderate your diet to try to make the stools a little firmer but avoid becoming constipated.
- Avoid foods high in natural bran as the flakes are passed unaltered and make it very difficult to clean effectively.

### Information and advice

If you have any worries or need more information please contact the Colorectal Nurse Specialists on:

Lincoln County Hospital 01522 573776  
 Grantham Hospital 01476 464822

Please leave a message on the answerphone if no one is in the office.

### References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email [patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk)

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at [patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk)



# Anal Itching

Colorectal Departments  
 Grantham Hospital 01476 464822  
 Lincoln County Hospital 01522 573776  
[www.ulh.nhs.uk](http://www.ulh.nhs.uk)

## Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet will explain what causes anal itching and what you can do to help the symptoms.

## What causes anal itching/irritation?

The correct name for anal itching/irritation is **pruritis ani**. It has many possible causes, including piles and certain skin conditions. However, the most common reason is a minor leakage from the anus. If small amounts of bowel motion or liquid mucous leak from the anus, this can irritate the delicate surrounding skin.

## What can I do to help?

It is often difficult to treat and may take many months of gentle care to improve things. Some things that you can do to help are as follows:

- Pay special attention to hygiene. Keep the area clean by washing, preferably twice a day and after each bowel motion. This is especially important at night as often the itching is worse at night.
- A bidet is ideal, but having a bath or using a shower jet to direct the water is almost as good.
- If you are out at work, take a small plastic bottle of water into the toilet to wash with after a bowel motion.
- Alternatively you could use moist toilet tissue (available from chemists or larger supermarkets) or baby wipes. Avoid general purpose moist wipes as these often contain alcohol and will sting.
- If desperate then use saliva on ordinary toilet paper to enable more thorough cleaning.
- Some people find cold water more soothing than hot to wash with.
- Wash with unperfumed soap, or if very sore, avoid soap altogether.

- Use your finger tips or some damp cotton wool (make up remover pads are ideal for this) rather than a flannel.
- If you have a problem with leakage from your anus, a cotton pad on your finger can be used to gently clean into the anus to ensure there is no residue left behind.
- If the leakage continues after wiping, a small plug of cotton wool tucked in close to the anus may stop the stool from coming out to irritate the skin, but you must change this each time you have a bowel motion.
- **Dry the area thoroughly.** Dab gently with toilet paper or better still a soft towel. **DO NOT RUB THE AREA DRY.** Even better is a hairdryer to use after washing but be sure it is on a cool setting and do not use in the bathroom!
- Avoid excessive moisture. Never leave a wet dressing on the anal skin. Also avoid ointments and creams unless specifically prescribed by the specialist. Greasy preparations tend to keep the skin soggy, which is what you want to avoid.
- Avoid the use of talcum powder, deodorants and antiseptics, also do not put anything in the bath water ie. bath salts, bubble bath or bath oil.
- Avoid scratching the area however tempting this may be. If the itching becomes unbearable and you are desperate then pinch with your fingers outside your clothing.
- If you find yourself scratching in your sleep, get some cotton gloves to wear in bed (available from the chemist).

## Clothing

- Wear loose cotton underwear and change daily. Avoid all man made fabrics coming into contact with your bottom. Women should avoid tights (wear stockings or open crotch tights which allow air to circulate).
- Avoid tight trousers or jeans and avoid sitting on plastic chairs for long periods of time.