

## What Is Anal Fissure?

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Anal fissures are a small split or tear in the skin lining the anus. An anal fissure may be acute (recent onset) or chronic (present for a long period of time). Chronic fissures may have a *sentinel pile* or *skin tag* (a lump on the outside of the anus) or *hypertrophied papilla* (extra tissue just inside the anal canal).

### How do I know I have an Anal Fissure?

- Severe pain (during or after bowel movement).
- Bright red blood.

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### What causes an Anal Fissure?

- Trauma to the inner lining of the anus from hard, dry bowel movements.
- Tight anal sphincter muscles (increased muscle tone).
- Inflammatory (redness and swelling) conditions (such as Crohn's disease).
- Other conditions like certain anal infections or tumors (growths).

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### How can I correct it?

Most anal fissures can heal after a few days or weeks with simple treatments that can be done while at home. These can include:

- High Fiber Diet with fiber supplements
- Stool Softeners
- Sitz Baths (warm tub baths for 10-20 minutes several times a day)
- Nitroglycerin 0.2% or 0.3% cream
- Nifedipine ointment

If an anal fissure has not healed after six weeks, surgery may be necessary. The following procedures can be done in the operating room to treat an anal fissure:

- **Botulinum Toxin (Botox\*) injections** under anesthesia (in the operating room)
- **Sphincterotomy** (surgical separation of a piece of the internal anal sphincter)

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## Can an Anal Fissure come back?

Anal fissures can come back, and it is normal for a fissure to happen again after a hard bowel movement or other trauma. That is why it is very important to continue good bowel habits (no straining or pushing during movements, not sitting on the toilet for long periods of time) and a diet high in fiber as a lifestyle change even after the pain and bleeding has stopped.

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## How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

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## Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?

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