

A non-surgical management for piles/hemorrhoids

Understanding the gravity of the disease, the world is celebrating November 20th of every year as World Piles Day. Understanding the disease and trying to prevent the worsening of the disease and having an awareness of the best treatment modalities available for its treatment is an important knowledge in this direction.

Hemorrhoids or piles has gained notoriety since ages because of its main association with a complaint of flow of blood along with stools, which causes great stress and anxiety to one and all.

It is a disease basically caused since the time humans became two legged creatures and hence, we find mention of this disease as *Arshas* in Vedas as well as in various Ayurvedic texts like *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhita* etc.

What are hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are basically dilated and enlarged veins in the region of anal canal.

In Ayurveda, it is been termed as “*Arshas*” and has been defined as a very discomforting disease associated with the growth of small fleshy swellings and flow of blood from the *guda* or anus.

What are its different types?

Based on their presence inside or outside the anal opening, it has been classified as internal or external hemorrhoids.

Ayurveda, based on its main complaint of flow of blood, has considered it to be of *sravi* (fleshy growths associated with flow of blood) and *shushka* (fleshy growths not associated with out the flow of blood) types.

What can be the causes of hemorrhoids?

This is commonly seen in the members of the same family and hence a hereditary susceptibility to this disease can be found.

Dietary habits form one of the main causes for not only hemorrhoids but also for the causation of various other troublesome diseases of the anal region viz., fissure in ano and more importantly fistula in ano.

Excess non-vegetarian diet (owing to the lack of fibrous components), lack of raw fruits and vegetables in every day diet, drinking very less quantities of water everyday make the stools hard which in turn causes pressure over the blood carrying veins in the anal region and thus leading to its dilatation or enlargement to be called as piles.

Habit of prolonged straining (forcing) to evacuate the hard/soft stool because of a sense of incomplete bowel movement invariably pressurizes the veins causing their enlargement and also bleeding.

What are the features of hemorrhoids?

1. Painless bleeding of bright red blood along with the stools or after the passage of stools is one of the very important and discomforting/stressful features of this disease.
2. Single or multiple swellings at the anal opening, which can be felt while washing after passing the stools
3. A sensation of a fleshy mass coming out during passing stools which goes back on its own after the completion of passing the stools
4. Occasional pain and discharge of mucous

How to check whether one has this disease?

Examination of the anal region manually or by proctoscope under the supervision of an efficient surgeon is very important as not all conditions of bleeding during defecation can be attributed to only piles.

What can happen if timely treatment is not taken?

Profuse bleeding

Small quantities of bleeding over prolonged periods can be one of the causes of anemia resulting in exhaustion and inability to concentrate during work

The blood within the pile may get clotted (thrombosed) resulting in a severely painful swelling near the anus. (Thrombosed external hemorrhoid)

The enlarged pile when it prolapses out of the anal canal, can be pressed upon during sitting, riding vehicles or during passing of stools, resulting in pain, ulceration and sometimes gangrene of the mass (which can be life threatening)

Infection and abscess can form

What are the treatments available for its cure?

Conservative management includes use of laxatives viz., Freelix, Isova etc (the main constituent being Isabgol husk), use of fibrous diet, increasing the intake of water, daily exercise, avoiding straining during passing stools etc.

Other available curative treatments include – Sclerotherapy, Cryosurgery, Banding and Hemorrhoidectomy.

Though these treatments are successful to a varying extent, they are all associated with complications like recurrence, pain, severe hemorrhage, post-operative anal narrowing (stricture formation) or even anal incontinence (inability to control passage of gas (flatus), liquid stools or sometimes even hard stools)

What are the treatments available in Ayurveda for this?

Ayurveda provides a very good, non-surgical treatment termed “*kshara lepa*” (alkaline applications) or “*kshara sutra*” (alkaline Seton) for its cure, with minimal recurrences.

Kshara is an Ayurvedic pharmacological preparation which basically constitutes the alkaline extracts of a plant.

Kshara has wide applications, but has good clinically tested, scientifically proven efficacy in the management of hemorrhoids, fissure, fistula in ano and pilonidal sinus.

The *kshara* is applied in the form of a paste over the hemorrhoid or the *kshara sutra* is tied to the base of the hemorrhoid by an Ayurvedic surgeon.

This cauterizes the pile mass, coagulates and breaks down the collected blood in the veins, necroses the tissue in the hemorrhoidal veins thus gradually eliminating the pile mass with minimal recurrence.

The greatest advantage of this treatment is its minimal hospitalization thus saving the working days, minimum pain and minimum recurrence rates.

Thus, in recent days this treatment of *kshara sutra* or *kshara karma* is slowly gaining popularity even among the Western countries thus gradually becoming the mainstay of the treatment of hemorrhoids.

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