

# PRURITUS ANI



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Itching or burning around the anus and genitals. It is much more common in men than in women.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Itching, often intense and worse at night.
- There may be some seepage from the anus.

### CAUSES

- Unknown (often).
- Yeast infection.
- Pinworms, scabies, or lice.
- Contact dermatitis caused by soaps, contraceptive foam or jelly, perfumed toilet paper, deodorant sprays, douches, or underwear made of synthetic fabric.
- Various skin disorders, including psoriasis or seborrheic dermatitis.
- Fissures, fistulas, proctitis, prolapsing hemorrhoids, skin tags, and dysfunction of the sphincter muscle.
- Vaginal discharge or skin atrophy in women caused by low estrogen levels.
- Chronic diarrhea.
- Excessive coffee intake.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Diabetes.
- Excessive sweating.
- Antibiotic drug use.
- Food allergy.
- Overweight.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid causes and risk factors where possible.
- Follow steps listed in Diagnosis & Treatment section.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Symptoms can be controlled with treatment, even if the cause cannot be found. It may take weeks to months for the itching to stop.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Skin damage, allowing a secondary bacterial infection to develop.
- Skin-thickening and chronic inflammation.
- Recurrence is common.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an exam of the affected area. Medical tests may include studies, such as cultures for fungi, or a microscopic exam for pinworm eggs or scabies in skin burrows.
- Treatment will be provided for any specific infection or problem that is diagnosed and for the itching.
- Keep showers or baths brief to reduce dryness and soap irritation. Don't overclean the anal area by rubbing or using too much soap. Use plain, unscented soap, or avoid soap entirely.
- Keep the rectal area clean, dry, and cool. Clean carefully after bowel movements. Use moist wipes or moistened toilet paper. Dry toilet paper can be irritating.
- Avoid contact with substances to which you are sensitive.
- Wear loose clothing and underclothing. Wear underwear with a cotton crotch or underwear made of cotton, rather than nylon or other synthetics.
- Women may be more comfortable using tampons for menstrual periods rather than sanitary napkins.
- Wear soft mittens on your hands at night, if you are scratching while asleep.

### MEDICATIONS

- You may use nonprescription cortisone ointment or cream. Apply 3 times a day, and rub in gently until it disappears. Discontinue use once itching stops.
- Stronger topical cortisone drugs may be prescribed.
- Drugs to treat an infection or other medical problem may be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY

Avoid activities that cause excess sweating.

### DIET

Avoid spicy or highly-seasoned foods and coffee. These irritate mucous membranes of the anus. Eat plenty of high-fiber foods to help avoid constipation.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of pruritus ani that persist, despite self-care.
- The skin area seems infected.

Special notes:

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More notes on the back of this page