Haemorrhoids (piles)

**Haemorrhoids, also known as piles, are swellings containing enlarged blood vessels that are found inside or around the rectum and anus.**

In many cases, haemorrhoids don't cause symptoms, and some people don't even realise they have them. However, when symptoms do occur, they may include:

* bleeding after passing a stool
* [itchy bottom](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Itchybottom/Pages/Introduction.aspx)
* a lump outside of the anus, which may need to be pushed back in after passing a stool
* a mucus discharge after passing a stool
* soreness, redness and swelling around anus

Haemorrhoids aren't usually painful, unless their blood supply slows down or is interrupted.

What causes haemorrhoids?

They're associated with increased pressure in the blood vessels in and around anus.

Many cases are thought to be caused by too much straining on the toilet, due to prolonged [constipation](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Constipation/Pages/Introduction.aspx) – this is often due to a lack of fibre in a person's diet. Chronic (long-term) [diarrhoea](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea/Pages/Introduction.aspx) can also more vulnerable to getting haemorrhoids.

Other factors that might increase risk of developing haemorrhoids include:

* being overweight or [obese](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Obesity/Pages/Introduction.aspx)
* age – as get older, body's supporting tissues get weaker,
* being pregnant – which can place increased pressure on pelvic blood vessels, causing them to enlarge (read more about[piles in pregnancy](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/piles-haemorrhoids-pregnant.aspx))
* having a family history of haemorrhoids
* regularly lifting heavy objects
* a persistent [cough](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cough/pages/introduction.aspx) or repeated vomiting
* sitting down for long periods of time

Preventing and treating haemorrhoids

* **gradually**[**increasing the amount of fibre in the diet**](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/how-to-get-more-fibre-into-your-diet.aspx) –
* [**drinking plenty of fluid**](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/water-drinks.aspx) –
* **not delaying going to the toilet** –
* **avoiding medication that causes constipation**–such as painkillers that contain codeine
* [**losing weight**](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Loseweight/Pages/Loseweighthome.aspx)
* [**exercising regularly**](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Fitness/Pages/Fitnesshome.aspx) – [Lose weight](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Loseweight/Pages/Loseweighthome.aspx)