



## **PRURITIS ANI**

**What is pruritis ani?** Itching around the anal area, called pruritis ani, is a common condition. An irresistible urge to scratch results. It may be most noticeable and bothersome at night or after bowel movements.

**What causes this to happen?** Several factors may be at fault. A common cause is excessive cleaning of the anal area. Moisture around the anus, from excessive sweating or from moist, sticky stools, is another possible cause. In some people, a loose and/or irritating stool may be caused by a high intake of liquids. In addition, drinking certain beverages, including some alcoholic beverages - especially beer - milk, citrus fruit juices and drinks containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea and cola, may be aggravating for some people. Similarly, some foods that may be a problem include chocolate, fruits, tomatoes, nuts and popcorn. Other rare causes of pruritis ani may include pinworms, psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, hemorrhoids, anal fissures, anal infections and allergies.

**Does pruritis ani result from lack of cleanliness?** Cleanliness is almost never a factor. However, the natural tendency once a person develops this itching is to wash the area vigorously and frequently with soap and a washcloth. This almost always makes the problem worse by damaging the skin and washing away protective natural oils.

**What can be done to make this itching go away?** A careful examination by a colon and rectal surgeon or other physician may identify a definite cause for the itching. Your physician can recommend treatment to eliminate the specific problem.

## **TREATMENT OF PRURITIS ANI**

**Avoid further trauma to the affected area:**

- Do not use soap of any kind on the anal area.
- Do not scrub the anal area with anything - even toilet paper.
- For hygiene, use wet toilet paper, baby wipes or a wet washcloth to blot the area clean. Never rub. Try not to scratch the itchy area. Scratching produces more skin damage, which in turn makes the itching worse.

**Avoid moisture in the anal area:**

- Apply either a few wisps of cotton, a dry gauze, or some cornstarch powder to keep the area dry.
- Apply a skin barrier cream (Calmoseptine, Desitin, Zinc Oxide) to dry skin to protect from wetness.
- Avoid all medicated, perfumed and deodorant powders.

**Use only medications prescribed by your physician** and use them only as directed. Apply prescription medications sparingly to the skin around the anal area and avoid rubbing.

**Avoid excess fluids and the foods previously mentioned.** In most instances, a maximum of six glasses of fluid daily is reasonable. There is not usually any health benefit to drinking more fluid than this in the course of a day.

**How long does this treatment usually take?** Most people experience some relief from itching within a week. Complete cure usually comes within four to six weeks. A follow up appointment may be recommended for follow up or to prevent recurrence of pruritis ani.

(excerpted from [www.fascrs.org](http://www.fascrs.org) - patient information – pruritis ani)