

Why Do Hemorrhoids Itch, Causes, Relief and When It Is Something Else



Intro

Itching around the anus is one of the most frustrating symptoms of hemorrhoids, and it is not always caused by hemorrhoids at all. According to [Cleveland Clinic colorectal surgeon Dr. Arielle Kanter](#), hemorrhoids are often a result of other bowel habits, which is why treating the underlying cause usually calms the itch.

This guide explains **why hemorrhoids itch**, how to tell when the itch has another cause, whether itching means a hemorrhoid is **healing**, and what actually helps.

Quick answer. Hemorrhoids itch mainly because of **mucus and moisture** on the skin, **inflammation** of the swollen tissue, and **cleaning problems**, both too little and too much. To calm the itch, keep the area **clean, dry and protected, stop scratching**, and use a **short course** of an over-the-counter cream only if you need it. Itching can also come from fissures, skin conditions, fungal infections or pinworms, so see a doctor if it does not improve after a week of home care. For the full home-care routine, read our guide to [fast hemorrhoid relief at home](#).

This guide is general information and not a diagnosis. If you are unsure what is causing your symptoms, ask a healthcare professional.

Why Do Hemorrhoids Itch So Badly

Hemorrhoid itching is rarely caused by one thing. It is usually a mix of three problems that feed each other.

Mucus and moisture. Swollen tissue can stop the anus from closing fully, so small amounts of **mucus or stool residue** reach the skin. [Merck Manual](#) notes that large internal hemorrhoids can cause mucus drainage and irritation. Skin that stays damp breaks down, which leads to itching, burning or stinging.

Inflammation. Swollen veins stretch the skin and irritate nearby nerve endings. The inflammation releases chemicals such as **histamine**, which trigger the itch.

Cleaning problems. Swelling makes it harder to clean the area fully after a bowel movement. Over-cleaning with soap, scented wipes or hard wiping strips the skin's natural oils and causes the same itch.

Scratching then damages the skin and the itch gets worse, which is why it can feel so intense.

External hemorrhoids are more likely to itch, burn and swell. **Internal hemorrhoids** can itch too, mostly through mucus leakage. For more on the two types, see our guide to [hemorrhoid causes, symptoms and treatments](#).

Is It Really Hemorrhoids? Other Causes of Anal Itching

Hemorrhoids are only one possible cause. Merck Manual states that most anal itching is **idiopathic or hygiene-related**, and itching is not always a hemorrhoid symptom. If your itch does not match the pattern of hemorrhoids, check this table.

Possible cause	What points to it	What to do
Skin irritation (contact dermatitis)	Itch began after a new soap, wipe or cream. Skin looks red, dry or cracked.	Stop the new product and clean with plain water.
Eczema or psoriasis	Dry, scaly patches, often on other parts of the body too.	See a doctor or dermatologist.
Fungal (yeast) infection	Red, moist or scaly rash that spreads.	Needs an antifungal from a doctor.
Pinworms	Intense itch that is worse at night, most common in children.	Ask a doctor or pharmacist.
Anal fissure	Sharp pain during bowel movements, with bright red blood.	See a doctor. Our bleeding hemorrhoids guide explains what the blood can mean.

Stool leakage	Staining on underwear, or trouble cleaning fully.	Mention it to your doctor.
Food triggers	Itch is worse after coffee, spicy food, alcohol or tomato products.	Track what you eat and cut back on likely triggers.

Anal cancer is a rare cause, but it is a reason not to ignore an itch that **does not go away**, especially with a lump, a sore that does not heal or bleeding. If the itch lasts, read why a [hemorrhoid may not go away](#), and see a doctor.

How to Stop Hemorrhoid Itching

The goal is to protect the skin and break the itch-scratch cycle. These steps work best in this order.

Stop scratching. Scratching feels good for a moment, but it damages the skin and makes the itch stronger.

Clean gently, then dry. Rinse with plain water, using a bidet or a peri bottle if you have one, and **pat dry**. Avoid soap, scented wipes and hard wiping. Cleveland Clinic's Dr. Kanters stresses that you do not need to over-clean, because doing less is often better.

Protect the skin. A **zinc oxide** barrier cream shields irritated skin from moisture and stool. Dr. Kanters recommends it over petroleum-based ointments and traditional hemorrhoid creams, which focus on shrinking veins and not on protecting skin.

Use hydrocortisone only for a short time. A 1% **hydrocortisone** cream can reduce inflammation and itching, but [Mayo Clinic](#) advises against using it for more than a week without a doctor's guidance, because longer use can thin the skin. Products with **lidocaine** numb the itch for a short time.

Keep stools soft. Hard stools and straining keep the cycle going. Fiber and fluids help, and our [high-fiber hemorrhoid diet guide](#) shows how. For the full toolkit, including sitz baths, see [fast hemorrhoid relief at home](#).

Hemorrhoid Itching at Night and After a Bowel Movement

Itching often feels worse at night because there are **fewer distractions** and your usual control over scratching drops while you sleep. A simple bedtime routine helps: clean gently, pat dry, apply a barrier cream, and wear **loose cotton underwear**. If you scratch in your sleep, thin cotton gloves can protect the skin.

Itching **after a bowel movement** usually comes from stool residue and moisture. Rinse or pat the area clean, dry it fully and avoid dry, rough toilet paper.

Does Itching Mean a Hemorrhoid Is Healing

Not reliably. Itching can appear at any stage, including while swelling settles, and it is **not a dependable sign of healing**. Judge by the trend instead. If the itch, swelling and pain are slowly **getting better** over several days, your home care is probably working. If the itch is **getting worse or has not improved after a week**, the cause may be something else and a doctor should check it.

Itching in Pregnancy

Pregnancy changes which creams are safe, so ask your doctor, midwife or pharmacist before using any medicated product. Our guide to [hemorrhoids during pregnancy](#) explains what to ask.

Sitting, Heat and Moisture

Long hours on a hot, non-breathable seat can keep the area damp, which feeds the itch. Take short walking breaks, wear breathable clothing and choose a seat with a **breathable, washable cover**. sitcushion donut cushions have a removable 4D mesh cover. A cushion is a comfort aid, not a treatment, and our [best hemorrhoid cushions guide](#) compares the options.

When to See a Doctor About Hemorrhoid Itching



Most itching from hemorrhoids settles with simple care. [NIDDK](#) advises seeing a doctor if symptoms continue after **one week of home treatment** or if you have rectal bleeding. Use this table to decide how quickly to act.

What you notice	What to do
Large amounts of bleeding , or bleeding with dizziness or faintness	Go to emergency care right away
Bleeding during bowel movements , especially new bleeding or a change in bowel habits	Make an appointment, because Mayo Clinic warns that rectal bleeding should not be assumed to be hemorrhoids
A sudden, hard, painful lump that looks bluish or purple	Call a doctor promptly. See our 72-hour guide
A lump or sore that does not heal , or itching that keeps returning	See a doctor to rule out other causes
A red, scaly or oozing rash , or signs of infection such as fever or pus	See a doctor
No improvement after a week of home care	Make an appointment

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do hemorrhoids itch so bad?

Hemorrhoids itch so badly because several irritants act on the same thin skin at once. Swollen tissue irritates nerve endings and triggers **histamine**, mucus keeps the skin damp, and swelling makes it harder to clean. Scratching then damages the skin, which makes the itch stronger and starts an **itch-scratch cycle**.

Do hemorrhoids always itch?

No. Hemorrhoids can itch, but many people have them with **no itching at all**, only bleeding or a lump. Itching is more common with **external hemorrhoids**. If you itch without any swelling, lump or blood, the cause may not be hemorrhoids.

Do internal hemorrhoids itch?

Yes, but mostly in an indirect way. Internal hemorrhoids can leak **mucus** onto the skin, or slip out of the anus (prolapse) and irritate it. Internal hemorrhoids often cause **painless bleeding** more than itching.

Can hemorrhoids itch and burn?

Yes. Moisture, inflammation and harsh cleaning can cause both itching and a **burning or stinging** feeling on the skin. If the burning comes with sharp pain during bowel movements or bright red blood, an **anal fissure** may be the cause, so see a doctor.

Do hemorrhoids itch when healing?

They can, but itching is **not a reliable sign of healing**. Itching can appear at any stage, including while swelling settles. Look at the **trend** instead. If the itch, swelling and pain slowly improve over several days, your care is probably working. If the itch is getting worse, or has not improved after a week, see a doctor.

How do you stop hemorrhoids from itching fast?

Stop scratching, rinse with plain water and **pat dry**, then apply a **zinc oxide** barrier cream to protect the skin. A **1% hydrocortisone** cream can reduce inflammation for a short time, but not for more than a week without medical advice. A wrapped cold pack for a few minutes can ease the urge to scratch, though it is only a comfort measure.

How do you stop hemorrhoids from itching at night?

Hemorrhoid itching often feels worse at night because there are **fewer distractions** and you cannot control scratching in your sleep. Before bed, rinse gently, pat dry, apply a **barrier cream** and wear **loose cotton underwear**. Keep your nails short, and consider thin cotton gloves if you scratch while asleep.

How can I tell if the itch is from hemorrhoids?

Itching is more likely from hemorrhoids if you also notice a **soft lump or swelling**, mucus, or **bright red blood** on the tissue. It points to another cause if you see a scaly or oozing rash, notice itching that is worst at night (especially in children, which can mean **pinworms**), or feel sharp pain during bowel movements (a **fissure**). If you are unsure, or the itch lasts more than a week, a doctor can confirm the cause.

The Bottom Line on Hemorrhoid Itching

Hemorrhoids itch because of **mucus, moisture, inflammation and cleaning problems**, and itching is not always caused by hemorrhoids. Keep the area clean, dry and protected, **stop**

scratching, and use medicated creams only for a short time. If the itch does not improve after a week, or it comes with bleeding, a lump or a rash, see a doctor.