

# Pruritus Ani

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Pruritus ani (excessive itching in the anal area) can be caused by a number of different conditions. The most common cause is irritation from a particular substance or material such as medications, soaps, or fabrics. It may also be caused by a yeast or fungal infection; a parasite, such as pinworms; hemorrhoids; some skin disorders; and either poor or overzealous hygiene. Often no specific cause is found. The risk increases with diabetes, hot weather, constricting non-ventilated clothing, and other conditions which increase moisture.

Symptoms may include:

- Pain, redness around the anal area
- Cracks or breaks in the skin
- Itching may be more severe at night

{mospagebreak title=What your doctor can do}

What your doctor can do:

- Diagnose the problem by asking about the symptoms, doing a physical exam, and maybe ordering laboratory tests
- Prescribe antibiotics or anti-fungal medications either oral or topical, depending on the underlying cause.

{mospagebreak title=What you can do}

What you can do:

- Take medications as your doctor has instructed.
- Keep the anal area clean and dry. Use moistened toilet paper or cotton cloth with warm water (not hot) and pat dry. DO NOT rub. Toilet tissue alone does not adequately clean the anal area.
- Use plain, unscented soap for bathing.
- Avoid very hot water. Try lukewarm or tepid water for bathing.
- Sitting in warm water for 15-20 minutes several times a day may decrease itching.
- Avoid contact with possible irritants such as perfumed soaps, lotions, and toilet paper.

- DO NOT take bubble baths.
  
- Wear cotton underwear and change daily. Avoid wearing underwear made with synthetic materials, such as nylon, because they hold moisture and trap bacteria against your skin.
  
- Avoid wearing tight pants, leggings, or other tight clothing. Wear loose fitting cotton to help air circulate.
  
- If you are diabetic, try to keep your blood sugar levels under control.
  
- Avoid hot environments and unnecessary sweating.
  
- Avoid applying creams or lotions other than those recommended or prescribed.

What you can expect:

- Your recovery usually depends on the underlying cause.
  
- Possible complications include bacterial infections if the skin becomes cracked or broken open; scarring and inflammation of tissues.

Contact your doctor if symptoms do not resolve with treatment; or if you develop a fever or other signs of infection (redness, swelling, pain, warmth, and drainage).