Gastrointestinal & Minimally Invasive Surgery Division

MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRURITUS ANI (ANAL ITCHING)

It is important to avoid injury to the skin from excessive wiping or scratching.

When showering or bathing, avoid the excessive use of soap, especially rubbing the bar on the anal area or rubbing the itching area with a washcloth. Soap is highly alkaline and the residues will collect in the folds of the skin causing irritation and it will alter the normal acidity of the skin.

After bowel movements, wipe gently – never rub harshly. Use a wet cotton or Kleenex to clean the area. A soap-less cleaner or lotion such as Balneol may be used on the cotton. Avoid scented toilet paper.

If you have problems with seepage during the day, wear a thin strip of cotton drawn off the side of a roll of absorbent cotton. The cotton may be dusted with corn-starch or baby powder. Change the cotton frequently. It is important to apply the pledget directly to the anus. A sanitary napkin is not a substitute.

If you shower rather than use a bath tub, use a hand-held shower attachment.

Apply the prescribed cream or lotion once or twice per day. When the symptoms resolve, save the cream for any recurrence.

Eat a high fiber diet and drink plenty of liquids. Take a fiber supplement such as Konsyl, Metamucil, or Citrucel, if necessary.

Items in the diet that produce gas, indigestion or loose bowel movements should be avoided. Foods associated with irritation of the bowel, producing mucus or aggravating drainage includes citrus fruits and juices, spices (especially peppers) and coffee, including “decaf”. Tea is okay.

We recommend loose clothing and underwear. Use underwear made from cotton rather than nylon or other synthetic materials.

Recurrences are common and to be expected. Call or make a return appointment to be seen in clinic if you are unable to control your itching, or if the situation worsens in spite of these measures.

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