



Colon & Rectal Surgery & Colonoscopy

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Severe Perianal Itching and Irritation (PRURITUS ANI)

Pruritus Ani is a very bothersome skin condition that causes intense itching and burning around the anus (rectal opening). It is a very common condition that can become severe. Irresistible urge to scratch, burning pain and superficial bleeding are the most common symptoms. The most frequent causes of pruritus are:

Fungal overgrowth: Fungus is a normal inhabitant of the human skin. Overgrowth caused by increased moisture can severely irritate the skin. The prolonged exposure to moisture makes the condition worse and the symptoms more severe.

Skin irritation and sensitivity: Certain foods can make your stool very irritating to your own skin and cause severe symptoms. Caffeine products, excess dairy products, high fat foods, very spicy food, beer and excess alcoholic beverages can also cause severe irritation.

Contact dermatitis: Certain scented toilet papers and pads, irritating soaps and creams, certain fabrics and detergents, can cause severe irritation of the area.

Fecal incontinence and diarrhea: Chronic soiling of the area with solid or liquid stool is a very strong irritant and one of the most common causes of pruritus.

Treatment consists of elimination of the contributing factors, the healing of the inflammatory changes and prevention of a recurrence.

Changes in your diet, the use of a non allergenic soap, the use of non-scented baby wipes, the gentle patting and drying of the skin (you may use a cool blow dryer after a shower or bath) are factors in the treatment. Consult your doctor and don't apply just any ointment since the condition may get worse.

Avoid scratching as much as possible, wear loose cotton underwear, keep the area clean and dry with gentle wiping after a bowel movement. Use plain white toilet paper or non-scented baby wipes.

Visit us at the office where we have some simple therapies that can make you feel much better. Consult your doctor for a checkup to confirm the diagnosis, because other more severe conditions can present with similar symptoms.

Even though these conditions are minor, they are best treated by a Board Certified Colon and Rectal Surgeon, an expert in this field.