

5 Operation: anal advancement flap.

This is a slightly bigger operation, although it can still be done as a day case. It involves cutting out the fissure and moving a piece of the lining of the upper anus to fill the gap.

It works best for people who already have some weakness of their sphincter muscle and is less likely to reduce control of the sphincter muscle, although sometimes the wound takes time to heal, and sometimes there is a persistent slight discharge of mucus after the operation.

Nowadays most people opt for dietary change and use of a cream. Only those who are not better after three months continuous use of the cream usually need to come to discuss surgery for their anal fissure.

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Anal Fissure

A patient's guide



An anal fissure is a crack in the skin of the anus that causes pain on passing a motion. The pain lasts for more than half an hour, and sometimes several hours. There maybe a little bleeding and/or a small skin tag at the anus.

Fissures are commonest in people between the ages of 20 and 40. Fissures are usually caused by passing a hard motion, or sometimes by a bout of diarrhoea.

Anal fissure treatments:

1 High fibre and water diet. If you eat a lot of fruit and vegetables, and drink plenty if water, this makes your stool softer and often helps anal fissures to heal. This type of diet will also reduce the risk of fissure coming back again.

2 GTN ointment. (two per cent twice daily). This special cream can only be obtained on prescription.

If you put it on your anus twice daily for eight-twelve weeks it will cure approximately two thirds of anal fissures. Wear plastic gloves to apply it, since if you absorb much into your bloodstream it can cause headache.

It works by relaxing the sphincter muscle of your bottom. This improves the blood supply to the fissure which helps it to heal.

3 Diltiazem ointment (two per cent). This is another special cream that can only be obtained on prescription. Again it needs to be put on your anus twice a day for eight-twelve weeks and can cure approx two thirds of fissures.

It usually doesn't cause headache, but may cause itching around the anus. It works in a slightly different way to GTN cream, so may succeed when that fails. It is more expensive than GTN ointment.

4 Operation; lateral sphincterotomy.

This is a small operation in which the sphincter muscle of your bottom is cut a little to loosen it. The operation is usually done as a day case under general anaesthetic and it works in 95 per cent of people, relieving the fissure pain rapidly.

In a small proportion of patients the loosening of the muscle can reduce your sphincter control so that you might pass wind or stain your underwear after having this operation.

For this reason the operation is usually unsuitable for people who already have a weaker sphincter muscle including most women who have had babies.