

PERIANAL TOILETING TECHNIQUES

- The medical term for itching and burning in the anal area is **Pruritis Ani**.
 - Anal itching is a symptom and not a disease itself and is a surprisingly common problem.
 - Skin breakdown in the anal area leads to itching. Scratching, too much cleansing or too little cleansing can lead to further skin trauma and ongoing symptoms.
- Management of pruritis ani symptoms involves breaking the scratch-itch cycle

Cleansing:

- How you cleanse the area after a bowel movement is important.
 - A sitz bath (soaking in a clean tub with or without Epsom salts) is the preferred method after a bowel movement.
 - If this is inconvenient a spray shower head to the perineum can be performed.
 - If out of the house, use non-perfumed baby wipes to clean.
 - Avoid excessive and vigorous wiping with dry toilet paper. If toilet paper is used, blot the area instead of wiping.
- After a sitz bath or shower, dry the anus by blotting dry with a towel or consider using a blow-dryer to avoid skin trauma.
- Avoid skin irritants such as perfumed soaps
- If you find that there is excessive moisture between bowel movements, apply baby powder or corn starch to the anus to absorb the fluid. If there is excessive moisture put the powder on a cotton ball and tuck it at the anal opening.
- If there is skin breakdown, a zinc barrier cream can be used until the skin is healed. Avoid excessive creams and ointments which leave the area moist.

Diet:

- Ensure that you are getting enough fibre in your diet.
- Avoiding caffeine, spicy foods, tomato products and citrus may reduce anal seepage.

Clothing/Personal habits:

- Wear breathable cotton undergarments and avoid tight, non-breathable clothes.
- If there is severe perianal itching and you scratch at night, clip your finger nails short and consider wearing cotton gloves to sleep to prevent accidental scratching.
- Often this condition can be cured by a strict no-scratching period to allow the skin to heal.
- Long-term use of steroid creams may thin the peri-anal skin and cause ongoing problems.
- Some medical conditions can also cause itching and your physician should examine you to rule these out.
- Most cases will resolve with these simple measures but extreme cases may require further treatment by your doctor.