

General Surgery & Surgical Oncology

Hemorrhoidectomy

What is a hemorrhoidectomy?

A hemorrhoidectomy is surgery to remove hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the lower rectum and anus. They can cause pain, bleeding, and itching.

When is it used?

Hemorrhoidectomy is one method of treating hemorrhoids. It is usually used only for severe hemorrhoids or when other treatments do not help. Examples of alternative treatments are:

- to improve your bowel habits, increase the fiber in your diet, drink more water, and get regular exercise
- to try anesthetic ointments or sitz baths
- to place tight bands around the hemorrhoids
- to destroy the hemorrhoids with freezing, electrical or laser heat, or infrared light
- to inject a chemical solution to shrink the hemorrhoid.

You should ask your health care provider about these choices.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

Plan for your care and recovery after the operation. Ask someone to drive you home after the surgery. Allow for time to rest and try to find people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow your health care provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers heal more slowly after surgery. They are also more likely to have breathing problems during surgery. For this reason, if you are a smoker, you should quit at least 2 weeks before the procedure. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery. Also, your wounds will heal much better if you do not smoke after the surgery.

Follow any other instructions your provider gives you. Eat a light meal, such as soup or salad, the night before the procedure. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight and the morning before the procedure. Do not even drink coffee, tea, or water.

What happens during the procedure?

You are given regional or general anesthesia. The regional anesthetic will make you feel temporarily numb from the chest down so that you have no pain during the procedure. The general anesthetic will relax your muscles, put you to sleep, and prevent you from feeling pain.

The doctor will put an anoscope (a tubelike instrument for examining the lower rectum and anal canal) into your anus. The doctor will remove the swollen veins.

Depending on the size and location of the removed hemorrhoids, the doctor may sew the wounds closed or leave them open to heal.

What happens after the procedure?

In most cases you will go home that day. In some cases you may stay in the hospital 1 to 2 days, depending on your age, health, and other circumstances.

Follow your health care provider's instructions for caring for yourself as you recover. Most likely, you will need to take sitz baths, use stool softeners, and apply ointments to the area. Avoid all heavy lifting for 2 to 3 weeks. You may return to work in a few days or weeks, depending on the type of work. You may have trouble passing urine and controlling gas and bowel movements for a few days after this operation.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

You will be relieved of the itching, painful, and bleeding hemorrhoids.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- There are some risks when you have general anesthesia. Discuss these risks with your health care provider.
- Regional anesthesia may not numb the area quite enough, and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia. Regional anesthesia is considered safer than general anesthesia.
- You may have trouble urinating.
- The wound may scar and leave a smaller opening in the anus, making it difficult to pass stools.
- Any remaining hemorrhoids may become inflamed.
- The hemorrhoids could recur.
- There is a risk of infection or bleeding.

You should ask your health care provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You have more bleeding after surgery than your provider says to expect.
- You cannot urinate.
- You develop a fever.
- You cannot pass bowel movements.

Call your provider during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its results.
- You want to make an appointment for a follow-up office visit.