Much Suffered, Less Talked

DR MOHAMMED RASHIDUL ANWAR

'Oh, it hurts! I am not going to the toilet anymore! It is bleeding'. These are expressions of a feeling, which more or less everyone has gone through. They are the cry of a hush-hush trouble that people experience and are shy to discuss. These are caused by Piles or Anal fissure. Piles are something more complex, and require expert handling, but fissures are simple yet equally painful.

An anal fissure is a small tear of the skin around the anus. Although the tear is small (usually less than a centimetre), it can be very painful. Anus is very sensitive; hence this tear is different from common skin breaches. The pain tends to be worse while you pass stool or after passing stool. Fissures are a common condition of the anal canal and are responsible for approx. 10 percent of the visits to a colorectal surgeon. They affect men and women equally and also both the young and the old.

The pain is mostly accompanied by fresh blood staining the toilet, which is an upsetting scene. In some cases, people are exhausted due to this undue loss of blood. The bleeding occurs right before or after the stool is passed, with a minute straining. Sometimes extreme uncomfortable itching may be felt in the anal region.

Symptoms of Anal Fissures

The following symptoms may be noticed if one is suffering from Anal Fissures-

- extreme pain in the anal area during defecation
- streaks of blood on stools or on tissue paper after wiping
- burning or itching in the anal area
- a visual tear on the anus
- a lump to skin in the anal region

Causes of Anal Fissure

Chronic constipation is the prime cause of anal fissures. Stretching and tearing of the skin in the anal passage can occur when a person passes hard stools. These tear usually heals normally and pain subsides within a few days without any treatment. Fissure does not develop in such cases.

But in some people, the tone of the muscles around the anus (that works as a sphincter) is high, reducing blood supply and ultimately delays the healing process. As a result anal fissures develop. Sometimes, long history of cough, lifting weight, child birth and excessive diarrhoea, which ultimately strains the anal region can cause Anal Fissure to develop.

> Surgery is considered only after diet and medications have failed.

Treatment

Treatment is simple and aims to ease the pain and keep the stools soft, giving time to the fissure to heal. Doctors usually prescribe

- **Anaesthetic ointment or cream**- These creams are prescribed, to numb the anal region and relieving pain. They are applied in the anal region 15 minutes before and after defecation to ease pain. They are prescribed for short periods (5-7 days), to avoid undue irritations.
- **Steroid Ointments**- They are prescribed to decrease inflammation and to ease itching and pain. They should also be used for short duration, as steroids delay healing.
- **Venotonic**- In acute cases Venotonics such as 'Daflon,' an oral medication, is prescribed to decrease swelling of the blood vessels in the anal region.
- I prefer an ointment named 'Protosedyl' or 'Erian' which is a combination of both anaesthetics and steroids.