



## **ANAL FISSURE**

### **WHAT IS AN ANAL FISSURE?**

Anal fissures are painful tears or ulcers on the lining of the anus. Anal fissures occur most often in infants and the incidence decreases rapidly with age.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?**

Painful bowel movements, blood on toilet tissue, blood on the surface of stool (but not mixed in with stool), and a visible tear are all symptoms of an anal fissure. The symptoms are similar to those caused by hemorrhoids.

### **WHAT CAUSES ANAL FISSURES?**

Anal fissures are most commonly caused by constipation and the resultant straining to pass a large, hard stool. Excessive wiping, irritation from dirty diapers, and scratching caused by pinworms or eczema can also cause anal fissures. These are also very similar to the causes of hemorrhoids.

### **HOW ARE ANAL FISSURES DIAGNOSED?**

Anal fissures are diagnosed by inspection of the rectum and/or use of an anoscope to examine the lining of the anus.

### **HOW ARE THEY TREATED?**

In infants, most anal fissures heal quickly without treatment. Frequent diaper changes and gentle wiping with soft materials help the area heal.

Stool softeners may aid in healing in adults. Application of petroleum jelly to the rectum, or sitz baths can moisten the surrounding skin and increase elasticity. You should increase your fluid intake, especially water intake. Addition of bulk to the diet increases absorption of water and helps prevent constipation.

**THOMAS G. STOVALL, M.D.**

Dr. Stovall is a Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, Tennessee and Partner of Women's Health Specialists, Inc.

**DR. TIM FOLSE, M.D,**

Dr. Folse is a primary care physician in Memphis, TN.

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**Health Information Provided by Women's Health Specialists**

7800 Wolf Trail Cove, Germantown, TN 38138, (901) 682-9222, [www.whsobgyn.com](http://www.whsobgyn.com)

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