

## Patient information

### Treating An Anal Fissure Lateral Sphincterotomy

Colorectal Surgery – Aintree Hospital

#### What is an anal fissure?

An anal fissure often starts as a tear or crack in the skin lining the anal canal. This after time can become a type of ulcer. A fissure most often affects young adults, but it can occur at any age.

An anal fissure can cause you a lot of pain and especially when you have your bowels open, (this pain can last for up to several hours afterwards) and bleeding (often the blood will appear on the toilet paper when you wipe) and sometimes irritation or itching around the anus.

Some fissures can heal on their own with no treatment, or by increasing your fibre intake and maintaining a well-balanced diet, as this helps keep the stools soft.

Sometimes the fissure can become chronic causing severe problems with bleeding and pain. It is not known what causes most fissures. Sometimes it is passing hard constipated stool, but many patients with fissures have not been constipated. Diarrhoea can also lead to a fissure in some people.

#### How will the operation help me?

Your colorectal surgeon has inspected your fissure and has now recommended a lateral sphincterotomy operation. This divides part of the internal muscle in the anal canal. This relieves the pain associated with a fissure and allows the fissure to heal. Healing will usually occur within two to four weeks.

#### Are there any risks or problems associated with the operation?

Usually after a lateral sphincterotomy, your fissure should heal well in about two to four weeks. However, we can't guarantee that you will never get another fissure, and in a few cases they do return.

Occasionally it is more difficult to clean the anal area after a bowel action. Moist toilet tissue may make this easier. A few people also experience difficulty in controlling wind (flatus). If this does become a problem for you please ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

#### What will happen when I return from the operating theatre?

When you return to the ward, you might have some discomfort, and this is to be expected. Painkillers or local anaesthetic gels are available you can ask your nurse if you need something to help with your discomfort. Most patients will go home on painkillers from the hospital.

You will also have a dressing in place around the entrance to the anus.

When you awake you will be able to eat and drink as you wish, we do encourage you to get out of bed and walk around as soon as possible. Once the anaesthetic has completely worn off you can be discharged home.

### **How long will I be in hospital?**

This procedure is usually done as a day case, but in some instances the consultant likes you to stay in overnight and go home the following day. It is not unusual for you not to see the consultant when you have had your surgery, as you will be discharged home while the consultant is still operating on other patients. You will be followed up either by the consultant or nurse specialist.

### **Washing and personal hygiene**

You should have a bath the day after your operation; this will help soak the dressing off. You may also notice some blood on wiping, and this is very normal after your surgery.

- Keep the area clean.
- Bath or shower daily
- Blood on wiping or on your stools is normal and can usually occur for seven to ten days after your surgery.
- After a bowel movement women should remember to wipe front to back and away from the vaginal area
- There are no stitches that will need to be removed.
- It might be more comfortable for you to open your bowels if your stools are kept soft
- Try high fibre diet to keep your bowels moving.

### **How long should I stay off work?**

The time taken to get back to your normal activities varies for each person, do as much as you feel comfortable doing. Most people need a day or so off work, but this will depend a little on what you do for your job. Other activities including sexual intercourse can be resumed as soon as you feel comfortable to do so.

### **What should I do if I want further information?**

If you should require any support or advice or even just want ask questions you can contact the specialist nurse who works alongside the consultants. She will always be happy to advise and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Further information

For further information contact:-

**Maxine Hanford, Colorectal Nurse Specialist in Benign Disease.**

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