

Pruritus Ani

What Is Pruritus Ani?

Pruritus ani is the medical term for severe itching around the anus. It is a common condition that causes an overwhelming urge to scratch, often worsening at night or after a bowel movement. It is more frequently seen in men than in women or children.

Causes Of Pruritus Ani

There are several potential causes of pruritus ani, including:

Anal conditions

- **Haemorrhoids (piles)** and **anal fissures** can cause tiny amounts of leakage, leading to skin irritation and itching
- **External anal skin tags** can make hygiene difficult, contributing to irritation

Hygiene and moisture-related factors

- **Sweating around the anal area** is a common trigger
- **Residual stool** or **excess moisture** left after bowel movements can cause skin irritation

Underlying skin conditions

- **Anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN)** and other dermatological conditions may contribute to itching
- **Fungal infections** of the anal skin can cause persistent itching and discomfort

Dietary triggers

Certain foods and drinks may irritate the anal skin after a bowel movement, including:

- **Tea, coffee, and carbonated drinks**
- **Milk and dairy products**

- **Tomatoes, citrus fruits, and spices**
- **Alcohol (especially beer and wine)**
- **Chocolate and cheese**

Irritants from soaps and hygiene products

- **Perfumed soaps, wipes, and lotions** can trigger local irritation

Parasitic infections

- **Threadworms**, a common cause of anal itching in children, can spread to other family members if not treated

How Is Pruritus Ani Investigated?

A detailed clinical history and a thorough examination of the anal skin, anus, and rectum are required to determine the underlying cause.

Diagnostic tests may include:

- **Proctoscopy or rigid sigmoidoscopy** - Used to inspect the lower bowel and identify any contributing conditions
- **Skin biopsy** - May be required to diagnose underlying skin conditions such as AIN or fungal infections

Treatment For Pruritus Ani

Addressing underlying causes

- If haemorrhoids, anal fissures, or skin tags are present, treatment is recommended to relieve symptoms.
- AIN and other skin conditions may require surgery or close monitoring.

Antifungal treatments

- Fungal infections usually respond well to antifungal creams.
- Overuse of creams containing steroids can damage the skin and worsen symptoms, so it is essential to follow medical advice.

Treatment for threadworms

- Family-wide treatment is often necessary to prevent reinfection.

Lifestyle and hygiene measures

- Thorough but gentle cleaning of the anal area after bowel movements is recommended.
- Avoiding dietary triggers may help reduce irritation.
- Avoiding perfumed soaps and wipes can prevent further skin sensitivity.

For more information on managing pruritus ani, refer to the pruritus ani advice sheet.

Why Choose The Midlands Bowel Clinic?

- **Specialist colorectal consultants** experienced in diagnosing and treating pruritus ani and related conditions
- **Comprehensive investigations**, including proctoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and skin biopsy if required
- **Personalised treatment plans**, including lifestyle modifications, dietary advice, and medical treatments

Contact Us

If you are experiencing persistent anal itching, irritation, or discomfort, contact us today to discuss diagnosis and treatment options.