

Information for Patients

Surgery to treat haemorrhoids, commonly known as piles, should only be carried out when specific criteria are met. There are many alternative and non-invasive treatments for treating haemorrhoids that should be considered before surgery.

About the condition

Haemorrhoids are swellings containing enlarged blood vessels found inside or around your bottom. In some cases, haemorrhoids are little more than a nuisance and you may not be too bothered by them. You might experience soreness, redness and swelling around the anus or bleeding when straining on the toilet or have blood in your poo or have a lump hanging down outside your anus which may need to be pushed back in after going to the toilet.

You should talk to your doctor if you have these symptoms to ensure the underlying cause is haemorrhoids and not something more serious. If confirmed, you should make a shared decision about what's best for you. If your haemorrhoids are becoming a problem, you should both consider the benefits, the risks and the alternatives to surgery and what will happen if you do nothing.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

Surgery is effective for haemorrhoids that hang down and have to be pushed back or which remain permanently outside the anal canal. It can also be considered if you have tried alternatives first and they have not worked.

What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

When considering surgery it is important to consider the significance of your symptoms, the benefits of surgery and the complications. The risks of haemorrhoid surgery may include infection, pain, bleeding, urinary retention, fissuring (a tear or cut in the anus), stenosis (narrowing of your anus) and in rare instances faecal incontinence (lack of control over bowel motions).

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

Often less severe haemorrhoids can be treated by simple measures including eating more fibre, drinking more water and avoiding straining on the toilet. Laxatives can be helpful to soften your stool. There are also other treatments that will help alleviate the symptoms of haemorrhoids, such as creams, ointments and suppositories. Some types of haemorrhoids can be treated without the need for surgery by specialist doctor in an outpatient clinics.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Once a diagnosis of haemorrhoids has been made, doing nothing, isn't likely to be harmful. Haemorrhoids often cause little more than discomfort and treatment should be tailored to your symptoms and based on a clinical assessment of the severity of condition.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.