

Haemorrhoids

Haemorrhoids (or piles) are enlargements of the blood vessels in and around the anal canal. Although they can cause troublesome symptoms they are not usually dangerous.

Haemorrhoids can present as

- Bleeding
- Pain/burning/itch
- A lump

Haemorrhoids are very common and occur in 85% of the population but it is often necessary to exclude other causes of symptoms by performing a colonoscopy.

Specific treatment of haemorrhoids includes:

- Infrared coagulation (I.R.C)
- Rubber Band Ligation ("Banding")

IRC involves using a heat probe via the anus to coagulate and shrink the haemorrhoid.

Banding uses tiny rubber bands to strangulate the haemorrhoid so it drops off or shrinks away. The rubber band passes with stool in a week or so.

Some haemorrhoids are too large to be treated with the above methods and require surgery.

The Surgical management of haemorrhoids has improved with newer and less painful techniques.

It is recommended that if you have problems with haemorrhoids you

- Have a high fibre diet
- Avoid straining at stool
- Do not read while on the toilet

It must be remembered that other causes of symptoms such as bowel cancer should be excluded, especially in the presence of bleeding from the rectum.