

Anal fissures and childhood cancer

What is an anal fissure?

An anal fissure is a tear in the skin of the anus (the opening where stool or poo comes out). The skin can tear on the outside or inside of the anus. This can happen when a child is constipated and forces a large, hard stool (bowel movement).

The tear makes passing stool very painful. Because of the pain, your child may not go to the bathroom when needed. This may lead to chronic constipation and infections.

What are signs and symptoms of an anal fissure?

- Babies will cry and show discomfort when passing stool.
- Blood may be seen on the surface of the hard stool.
- Children may avoid passing stool to avoid the pain of the anal fissure.
- There may be a visible tear or cut along the anal opening.



It is important to keep the anal area very clean especially when white blood cells (WBCs) are low. When WBC are low, the anal fissure can cause an infection.

Treatment of anal fissures

Treatment of anal fissures starts with treating the constipation. The health care team may prescribe laxatives for your child. When the hard stools turn to softer stools, the anal fissures will begin to heal.

What can I do to help treat my child's anal fissure?

1. Soft stool
 - Monitor how often your child has a bowel movement and what they look like (mushy, soft, hard).
 - Give your child laxatives as prescribed by their health care team.
2. Fibre and fluid
 - Add more fibre to your child's diet.
 - Wholegrain cereals and bread, fruit and vegetables are a good source of fibre.
 - Encourage your child to drink. Fibre needs fluid to help pass the stool.
3. Keep the anus clean
 - Keep your child's anus clean. Wash the area around your child's anus each day with mild soap and water.
 - Until the anal fissure is healed, apply a layer of petroleum jelly or a barrier cream prescribed by your child's health care team to your child's anus. This can help make passing stool less painful.



It is important to let your health care team know if your child has any sign or symptom of an anal fissure.