

Anal Skin Tags

Anal skin tags are excess skin growths that usually occur at the anal opening, where the inside of the anorectal canal joins with the outside of the body. They are not contagious and are very common, often found in connection with other anal conditions. However due to where they are located they can be mistaken with other anal conditions such as anal warts and haemorrhoids.

Anal skin tags usually occur as a result of an inflammatory lesion, anal injury or trauma. They can occur when an external haemorrhoid swells, is cured without medical advice and leaving a skin tag in its place. Tight clothing can also be a cause.

What are the symptoms of anal skin tags?

Most anal skin tags are symptom free and most people who have them only become aware of the tag when they wipe themselves after using the toilet or when washing.

However they can be a symptom of a blocked anal gland which if left untreated the gland can fill and develop into an abscess.

Some anal skin tags can cause problems, such as anal itching and if the tag does cause pain then medical advice should be sought as it could be the symptom of an underlying medical problem.

How can anal skin tags be investigated?

When you are seen in clinic the consultant will take a full history and carry out a clinical examination. Usually this will involve a rigid sigmoidoscopy and sometimes a proctoscopy as well.

If you are over the age of 40 and have had any bleeding or change in bowel habit the consultant may recommend endoscopic examination of the bowel either by flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy to ensure that it is otherwise healthy.

Sometimes a biopsy of the anal skin may be required before treating the skin tags.

What treatment is available for anal skin tags?

A commonly used technique for treating/ removing skin tags in the anal area is ligation. This involves cutting off the blood supply to the skin tag.

Alternatively, surgery can be performed to remove the tags along with all excess skin to minimise the risk of new skin tags developing in the future. Tags will therefore be cut out and a small flat area of skin will remain where the tag was leaving a small raw patch of skin which will heal on its own. During the healing phase the wound will be sore and care should be taken passing stools.

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What are the next steps?

If you think you have this condition or any of these symptoms, you will need to seek medical advice.

If you have private medical care or wish to pay to see a consultant:

Take this factsheet along to your own GP and request a referral to one of our consultants.

For more information or to make an appointment:

Contact the Birmingham Bowel Clinic on 0845 241 7762 or email enquiries@birminghambowelclinic.co.uk.

