

Anal Skin Tags

Anal skin tags are excess skin growths that usually occur at the anal opening. They are very common and are often found in connection with other anal conditions. People often mistake their skin tags for haemorrhoids which strictly speaking they are not. Haemorrhoids are however the commonest cause of skin tags. They are usually left over after a haemorrhoid which has become acutely swollen and tender gets better. Other causes of skin tags include anal fissure and occasionally Crohn's disease.

What are the symptoms of anal skin tags?

Most anal skin tags are symptom free. People who have them only become aware of the tag when they wipe themselves after using the toilet or when washing. Some anal skin tags can cause problems, such as anal itching, soreness and difficulty cleaning. If a skin tag starts to become more painful, if bleeding or ulceration occurs, then medical advice should be sought.

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?

Surgery treatment can be performed to remove the tags along with all excess skin to minimise the risk of new skin tags developing in the future. Stitches are not usually used when taking away the skin tags. Removing the tags will usually leave small raw areas which are allowed to heal up on their own.

For further advice about looking after the area after the surgery, patients can see our advice leaflet "Caring for yourself after minor anal surgery" which can be found in the Patient Information section of our website.

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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.