



A Comprehensive Guide to Rectal Bleeding: Causes, Diagnosis and Management

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DESCRIPTION

Rectal bleeding, though often alarming, is a common medical issue that can have various underlying causes. It refers to the passage of blood through the rectum and can manifest as blood in the stool, on toilet paper, or in the toilet bowl. While it may occur for benign reasons, rectal bleeding can also be a symptom of more serious conditions, necessitating prompt medical evaluation and treatment. There are several potential causes of rectal bleeding, ranging from minor conditions to life-threatening diseases. Hemorrhoids, swollen blood vessels in the rectum or anus, are a frequent cause of rectal bleeding, particularly in individuals who strain during bowel movements. Anal fissures, tears or cracks in the lining of the anus, can also lead to bleeding, often accompanied by pain during bowel movements. Other common causes include constipation, diarrhea, and inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. However, rectal bleeding can sometimes indicate more serious health issues. Colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer worldwide, can cause rectal bleeding along with other symptoms such as changes in bowel habits, unintended weight loss, and abdominal pain. Diverticulosis, the formation of small pouches in the colon wall, may lead to rectal bleeding if these pouches become inflamed or infected. Additionally, gastrointestinal infections, such as bacterial or viral gastroenteritis, can cause inflammation and bleeding in the digestive tract. The symptoms of rectal bleeding can vary depending on the underlying cause. In cases of hemorrhoids or anal fissures, bleeding is often bright red and may be accompanied by itching or pain around the anus. Bleeding associated with more serious conditions like colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease may be darker in color and may be accompanied by abdominal

discomfort, changes in bowel habits, or fatigue. Regardless of the symptoms, any instance of rectal bleeding should be evaluated by a healthcare professional to determine the cause and appropriate course of action. Diagnosing the cause of rectal bleeding typically involves a combination of medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests. Your doctor may inquire about your symptoms, bowel habits, and any relevant medical history to help narrow down potential causes. A digital rectal exam, in which the doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to feel for abnormalities, may be performed to check for hemorrhoids, anal fissures, or other rectal abnormalities. Depending on the suspected cause, additional tests such as colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, stool tests, or imaging studies like may be recommended to further evaluate the digestive tract. Treatment for rectal bleeding depends on the underlying cause. For minor issues like hemorrhoids or anal fissures, self-care measures such as over-the-counter creams, warm baths, and dietary modifications may help alleviate symptoms and promote healing. In some cases, procedures such as rubber band ligation or sclerotherapy may be recommended to treat hemorrhoids or anal fissures that do not respond to conservative measures. If rectal bleeding is due to a more serious condition like colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease, treatment may involve medications, surgery, or other interventions to manage the underlying disease.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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