

Hemorrhoids in Pregnancy

Piles of Piles

Did you know that in other parts of the world hemorrhoids are called piles? It seems appropriate, as anyone who has had a hemorrhoid knows it feels like a pile of something!

Hemorrhoids are just varicose veins of the rectum and anus. They are more common during pregnancy for a few reasons: your blood volume has expanded, which means your vascular system has to expand too. And just like a garden hose that has too much pressure, weak spots start to bulge a little. Add the weight of a baby in your pelvis, which causes some restrictions to blood flow, and you've got the perfect conditions for PILES!

So, who cares how they form, you just want them gone, right? Well, usually they do go away, after the birth. Not too many go completely away before that baby comes, so we need to figure out how to make this as easy on you as possible.

1. Add a generous dose of witch hazel (organic if you can find it) right into a package of Water Wipes (these are baby wipes with nothing but water on them). There you go! Extra large Tucks pads! You can use them after each bowel movement to clean, or you can keep them in the refrigerator and just tuck one against your hemorrhoids when they are bothering you. You can also make "padcicles" out of feminine napkins and a mixture of witch hazel, and aloe vera juice by lightly misting the pad with the mixture and freezing. You should make several of these at a time. If you have leftovers you can use them on your perineum and bottom after the birth.
2. You are not going to like this one, but it is the most important thing you can do. After you clean your bum with the wipes, you must lubricate your finger and place any hemorrhoids that are hanging out of your butt back into your butt. I know!! I know! It's awful. It's painful. But if you don't, the blood in that hemorrhoid will never get back into the blood stream and that hemorrhoid will only get bigger. Lie down, and push that puppy back in there. Use KY Jelly, or Preparation H. Now, as soon as you get it in, tighten your butt as tight as you can. Hold...hold...hold...this helps shrink that tissue and move the blood from the hemorrhoid back into circulation. Speaking of Preparation H, it is safe to use in pregnancy and can definitely help.
3. Do not let yourself get constipated. Water, prunes, fiber, stool softeners, magnesium (Natural Vitality Calm is my favorite), whatever it takes. Keep your stool the consistency of soft serve ice cream. The longer you sit on the toilet and strain, the worse it will get. Also now is a good time to invest in a squatty potty so that you are in more of a relaxed squatting position when you go.

4. Freshly grated potato applied to the outside of your anus will help to shrink the external hemorrhoids. Thank me later.
5. This one is important: Stop using soap to wash your rectum and vagina! It is drying to sensitive tissues and can cause the Ph of your vagina to get out of balance. Use straight coconut oil to clean your bottom instead! It has antibacterial properties as well as softening and healing properties. In addition you can add 1 drop of geranium and 1 drop of cypress essential oils to coconut oil and use it instead of KY jelly or Preparation H. These essential oils help shrink the vessels. If you don't have the essential oils just use the coconut oil.
6. Women who struggle with hemorrhoids worry a lot about how they are going to push a baby out without hurting themselves.
7. Break out that boppy pillow you bought for breastfeeding. It makes the perfect "donut" to sit on. You can also buy a "donut" pillow for sitting at most drug stores. If you have neither of these, then sit on a soft pillow to relieve pressure.

Your midwives have seen a lot of hemorrhoids and yours are not going to shock them. During pushing, don't be afraid to ask for counter-pressure on your hemorrhoids. A cool or warm washcloth held against your bum can make everything feel better, and it definitely prevents those hemorrhoids from getting worse. With enough counter pressure, we have seen hemorrhoids be smaller after the birth than before!

Another nice remedy is to remind your midwife about your hemorrhoid pain in labor so she can prepare a syringe of lidocaine and drip some on the hemorrhoid to numb it during pushing. This will only work if you are not having a water birth.

Although generally not serious, please let your midwives know if you are having troubles or if you are bleeding from your rectum when you have bowel movements. Occasionally hemorrhoids do need to be treated, and it can be done safely during pregnancy. Don't suffer in silence!