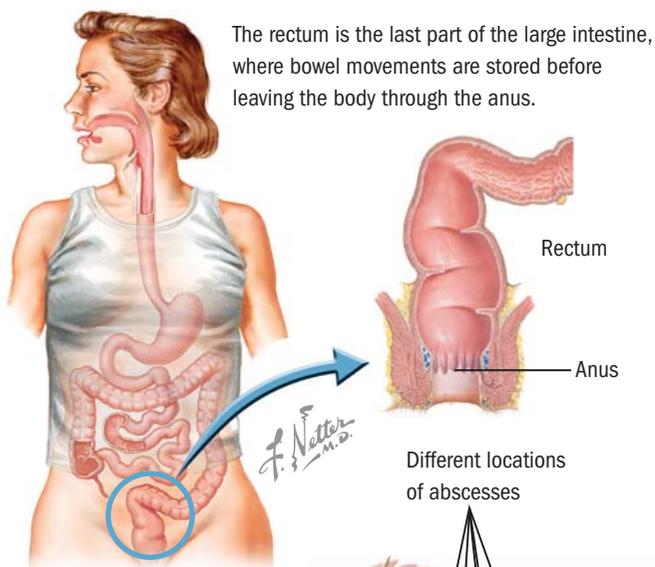


MANAGING YOUR PERIRECTAL ABSCESS



When bacteria infect the rectal space and glands in the rectum that make mucus, small cavities form and fill with pus. These are perirectal abscesses. These bacteria are normally in the intestine and on skin outside the anal canal. Men get these abscesses more often than women.



Symptoms include lasting rectal pain that is throbbing and often made worse with movement or straining. Other symptoms are fever, constipation, and trouble urinating.

Your doctor makes a diagnosis from checking your symptoms and doing a physical examination.



What Is a Perirectal Abscess?

The rectum is the last part of the large intestine, where stools (bowel movements) are stored before leaving the body through the anal canal and anus. When the rectal space (the perirectal space) and glands in the rectum that make mucus are infected by bacteria, small hollow cavities or holes that fill with pus form. These collections of pus-filled cavities in this area are called perirectal abscesses. Abscesses can also form around the anus and are called perianal abscesses.

Anyone can have a perirectal abscess, but men get them more often than women.

What Causes a Perirectal Abscess?

The most common cause is a bacterial infection from the anal canal into one of the perirectal spaces. All these bacteria are normally found in the bowel (large intestine) and on skin outside the anal canal.

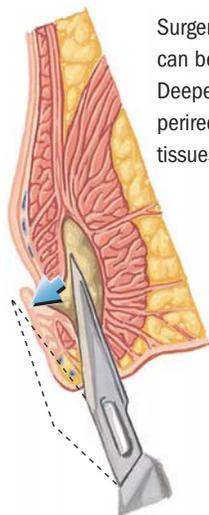
What Are the Symptoms of a Perirectal Abscess?

Symptoms include rectal pain that is lasting, throbbing, and often made worse with movement or straining. Others are fever, constipation, and trouble urinating. Sometimes, a rectal mass can be felt that is red, hot, tender, and swollen.

How Is a Perirectal Abscess Diagnosed?

The doctor makes a diagnosis from symptoms and doing a physical examination. Blood tests and urine tests may also be done.

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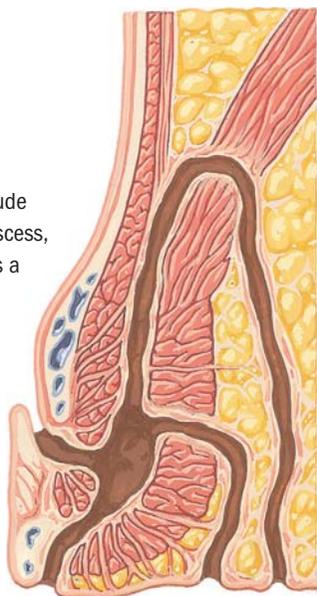


Surgery is usually needed. People with surface abscesses can be treated as an outpatient with local anesthesia. Deeper abscesses usually need a hospital stay. Untreated perirectal abscesses can spread infection into other tissues and be dangerous.



Antibiotics are often given but don't substitute for prompt surgery and draining the abscess. Pain after surgery is usually treated by sitting in warm water (sitz baths) and by taking pain medicines.

Complications after surgery can include incomplete healing, return of the abscess, and formation of a fistula. A fistula is a tunnel connecting the skin with the gland that the abscess started from. A fistula usually needs surgery.



Fistula



Call your doctor if you have rectal pain and high temperature, a mass in your rectum, pus draining from your anus, or after surgery you have drainage from your incision.

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How Is a Perirectal Abscess Treated?

The main treatment is surgery. People with surface abscesses can be treated as an outpatient with local anesthesia. Deeper abscesses usually need hospitalization. A general surgeon or surgeon who specializes in diseases of the colon and rectum does the operation.

Antibiotics are often given but don't substitute for prompt surgery and draining the abscess. Pain after surgery is usually treated by sitting in warm water (called sitz baths) three or four times daily. Medicines can also help relieve pain.

Stool softeners are used to prevent getting constipated and stop straining with bowel movements.

Complications that can occur after surgery include incomplete healing, having the abscess come back, and formation of a fistula. A fistula is a tunnel connecting the skin with the anal gland that the abscess started from. A fistula usually occurs 4 to 6 weeks after abscess drainage and needs surgery to fix it.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing a Perirectal Abscess:

- ✓ **DO** get treatment. Untreated perirectal abscesses can spread into other tissues and make the problem worse.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have rectal pain and high temperature.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you notice a mass in your rectum or drainage of pus from your anus.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have lasting drainage from your incision, fever, or pain after surgery.
- ⊗ **DON'T** ignore symptoms. The earlier surgery is done, the less the chances for complications (such as the abscess spreading to nearby tissues).
- ⊗ **DON'T** miss follow-up doctor appointments. The surgical wound should be checked frequently to make sure that it heals properly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American College of Surgeons
Tel: (312) 202-5000, (800) 621-4111
Website: <http://www.facs.org>