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STAYING HYDRATED PREVENTS HAEMORRHOIDS

Herbert Luswata says piles can have a hereditary component.

"Research shows that genetic factors may lead to weaker rectal muscles and tissues, making blood vessels in the rectum more prone to swelling and inflammation," he says. However, he emphasises that lifestyle remains the primary cause in most cases.

Age is another factor. Luswata notes that studies show people aged 45 and above are commonly affected. However, haemorrhoids can develop at any age, including in children, particularly when lifestyle and dietary factors contribute.

MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION

According to Luswata, haemorrhoids in both pregnant women and other patients can often be managed through conservative, non-surgical measures, especially when detected early.

Health experts agree that haemorrhoids are largely preventable through lifestyle adjustments.

"For people working in offices, it is better to take short breaks during the day and walk around rather than sit for prolonged periods," Luswata advises. Regular movement improves blood circulation and reduces pressure on rectal veins.

He also advises caution when engaging in heavy lifting. "People should seek guidance from professional physical instructors during exercise to avoid unnecessary abdominal strain," he says.

Namirembe advises that people should avoid spending long periods seated on the toilet. "Prolonged sitting time increases pressure on the anal veins," she explains.

For pregnant mothers, Luswata recommends increasing fibre intake by incorporating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains into meals. Drinking plenty of fluids helps soften stool and reduce straining.

Luswata also advises avoiding prolonged standing and refraining from excessive straining during bowel movements.

Staying well hydrated — by drinking at least six to eight glasses of water daily — is essential. Regular physical activity is equally important, as it promotes healthy digestion and consistent bowel movements.

In more severe cases, doctors may recommend medication to relieve pain and inflammation, or minor medical procedures to remove or shrink the swollen veins. However, specialists agree that prevention through healthy lifestyle choices remains the most effective long-term solution.

Ultimately, awareness, early diagnosis and simple lifestyle adjustments can significantly reduce the discomfort and anxiety associated with haemorrhoids.

TREATMENT

Luswata says treatment depends on whether the haemorrhoids are internal or external, as well as the severity of the condition. A proper medical assessment is important before any course of action is taken.

"For internal haemorrhoids, a patient should seek medical attention," Luswata notes. "In most cases, the doctor conducts a digital rectal examination, where a finger is gently inserted into the rectum to feel for abnormalities. An instrument called an anoscope may also be used to examine the inside of the anal canal and determine the extent of the swelling or injury."

Such examinations help rule out other possible causes of rectal bleeding and ensure accurate diagnosis.

For mild external haemorrhoids, treatment may be simple and conservative. In many cases, symptoms improve with dietary changes and better bowel habits. Increasing fibre intake and drinking plenty of water can significantly reduce straining, allowing the swollen veins to heal naturally over time.

For more severe cases — particularly when pain, bleeding or prolapse persists despite conservative management — Namirembe recommends medical procedures. These may include minimally invasive treatments or in advanced cases, a surgical procedure known as haemorrhoidectomy, which involves removing the enlarged haemorrhoids.

However, Namirembe cautions that surgery does not guarantee permanent prevention. "There is a risk of recurrence if lifestyle changes are not made."

WHAT TO AVOID

Dr Beatrice Namirembe discourages self-medication. She advises patients not to simply visit a pharmacy to purchase laxatives or painkillers without consulting a medical professional.

"Do not rely on unverified natural remedies," she cautions. "These do not have standardised dosages, and patients may not know the correct quantities to use."

She further warns against the habitual use of laxatives, noting that overuse can disrupt the body's natural bowel rhythm and worsen constipation over time —thereby increasing the risk of haemorrhoids.

"Do not wait for the condition to escalate," Namirembe advises.

By Victoria Bugembe