

Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are engorgements of the venous plexi in the rectum, anus, or both, with protrusion of the mucosa, anal margin, or both. The main signs and symptoms are anal mass, prolapse, bleeding, itching, and pain. Symptoms are usually precipitated by constipation, straining at stool, pregnancy, increased pelvic pressure, portal hypertension, or excessive diarrhea.

Hemorrhoids are classified as internal (originating above the dentate line, not painful) or external (very painful, below the dentate line*). They are found in the three “hemorrhoid quadrants:” left lateral, right anterior, or right posterior positions (Blackbourne 332-334).

Classification and treatment according to presence of symptoms and degree of disease (Lawrence 328-330):

Internal Hemorrhoids	Level of prolapse	Treatment
First degree	No prolapse	Asymptomatic: increase water intake; bulking agents; avoid constipation Symptomatic: same treatment as asymptomatic; possible rubber-band ligation; infrared coagulation if bleeding
Second degree	Prolapse with defecation, return spontaneously to anatomical position	Same conservative treatment; possible rubber band ligation for bleeding
Third degree	Prolapse with defecation, require manual reduction	Surgical hemorrhoidectomy if mixed external and internal third degree; possible rubber-band ligation for bleeding
Fourth degree	Permanent prolapse, not reducible	Surgical hemorrhoidectomy
External hemorrhoids	N/A	Excision may be indicated with pruritis or early thrombosis; spontaneous resolution later in disease; sitz bath; mild non-narcotic analgesic; conservative treatment

*Dentate line may also be referred to as pectinate line, anocutaneous line, anal verge, or anorectal junction

References:

Blackbourne, Lorne H. *Surgical Recall*. 5th Ed. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: Baltimore, MD, 2009.

Lawrence, Peter E. *Essentials of General Surgery*. 4th Ed. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: Baltimore, MD, 2006.