

Rectogesic Ointment (glyceryl trinitrate ointment 0.2%)

Your specialist has advised that you have an anal fissure. If this has not become a chronic condition it may respond to a combination of therapies, before surgery is contemplated.

A non-surgical option to try to treat this condition is rectogesic ointment.

An anal fissure is a crack or tear in the anus and anal canal, often caused by passing constipated motions, thus traumatising the area. An anal fissure can cause sharp pain, spasms and bleeding during and after bowel movements. It may also cause itching and burning in the anal area.

Rectogesic is an effective treatment and should be used if a high fibre diet, laxatives and local ointment fails. The rectogesic ointment should be applied sparingly to avoid headache. The ointment works by relaxing the anal sphincter and improving blood supply. Excess absorption (using too much) causes dilatation of blood vessels to the head - leading to headache.

The medication is available on prescription. It is currently not funded entirely by Pharmac and you may need to pay between \$40 - \$60 for the ointment.

If this is not an option for you we can apply to Pharmac to obtain a Special Authority number which covers this cost (but not normal prescription fees). It can take a week or so to obtain the authority.

- Please take the prescription to your usual pharmacy. They are able to contact Pharmac online to check if the Special Authority number has been issued and will then contact you to pick up the medication.
- If you choose to pay for this medication before the number has been issued it CANNOT be refunded retrospectively.
- If you have not been contacted to collect your medication after a week please contact your pharmacy.

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See next page for application information

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Glyceryl trinitrate ointment

If you apply glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) ointment to the anus, it relaxes the muscle around the anus (the anal sphincter). It also increases the blood supply to the damaged skin by dilating the blood vessels in that area. This may allow the fissure to heal better. It may also ease the pain. A doctor may advise that you use GTN ointment if you have had an anal fissure for longer than a week or so, and particularly if you have persistent (chronic) anal fissure.

You should use GTN exactly as described on the leaflet that comes with the packet. For example:

- A standard dose is 2.5cm squeezed out of the tube. (A measuring line comes with the product to measure 2.5cm of ointment.)
- You squeeze a dose of ointment onto a finger (which you can cover beforehand with cling film or similar). You then place the ointment just inside the anus.
- The ointment is used every 12 hours until the pain goes, or for up to 8 weeks maximum. (Some doctors advise to continue with the ointment for a full 6-8 weeks even if the pain goes much sooner. This is because it often takes 6-8 weeks of treatment for the fissure to heal fully, even if the pain has gone).
- The product leaflet gives details of who should not use the ointment and of side-effects that may occur. For example, it should not normally be used by children unless prescribed by a specialist and it may not always be advised in pregnant women.

Some points to note if you use GTN ointment include the following:

- About 5 in 10 people have a headache after applying GTN ointment. (The GTN gets into the bloodstream and may cause a headache.) The headache usually goes within 30 minutes or so. Painkillers such as paracetamol will help if a headache occurs. If headaches are troublesome, try using a smaller amount of ointment for a few days, and then gradually increase the amount back to normal over several days.
- Another tip if you get bad headaches is to rub a smaller amount of ointment (a pea-sized amount) around the rim of your anus rather than inserting the full amount into the anus. GTN is absorbed more into the bloodstream from the thin skin inside the anus. Using a smaller dose of ointment just on the rim of the anus may avoid side-effects. (However, it may not be as effective as using the full dose inserted into the anus.)
- Occasionally, GTN ointment can cause dizziness and light-headedness because it can cause a drop in blood pressure. To try to avoid this, get up slowly after you have been lying or sitting down and avoid drinking too much alcohol.
- **Contraindications.** Severe anaemia, glaucoma, hypotension, increased intracranial pressure and idiosyncrasy to glyceryl trinitrate. Glyceryl trinitrate should not be co-administered with sildenafil citrate (Viagra) and/or other phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitors
- RECTOGESIC should not be given to *pregnant* women - see contraindications. It is not known whether glyceryl trinitrate is excreted in human milk. Therefore RECTOGESIC should not be given to *lactating* women

Some studies have shown that other medicines may also help to relax the anal sphincter muscle and increase the blood supply to the area, so helping healing of an anal fissure. For example, medicines called calcium-channel blockers, such as diltiazem. These medicines do not seem to be any more effective than GTN ointment. They may sometimes be suggested for people unable to use GTN ointment.

An injection of botulinum toxin into the anal sphincter muscle has also shown to relax the anal sphincter muscle and so help anal fissures to heal. This treatment may be suggested in certain cases – for example, if other treatments have not been successful.

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