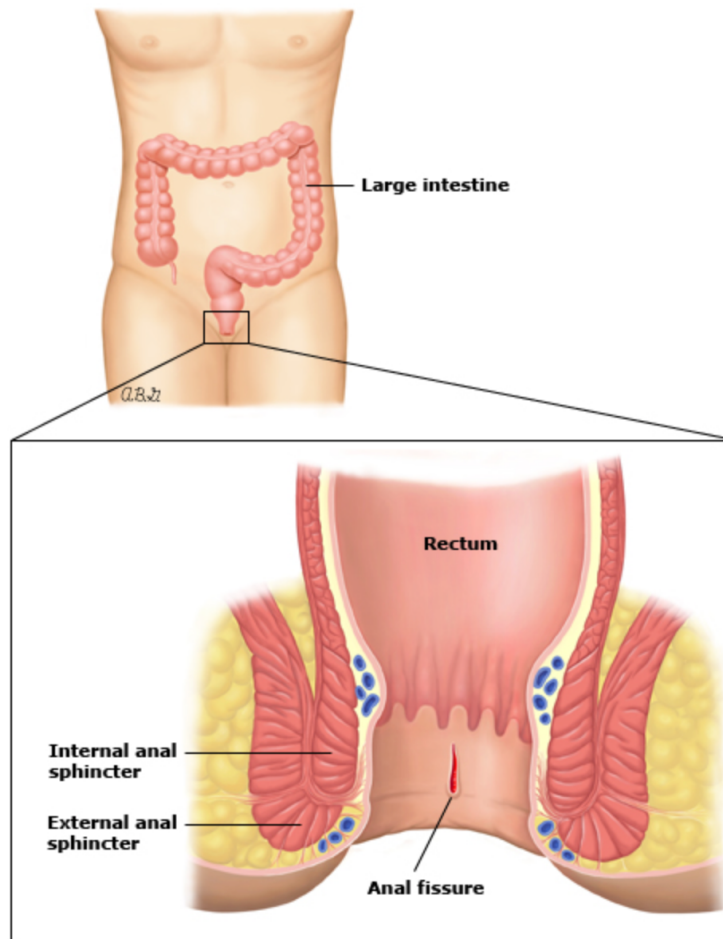


## Overview

An anal fissure is a tear in the lining of the anus, the opening where feces are excreted. The tear typically extends into a circular ring of muscle called the internal anal sphincter. The fissure is described as acute if it has been present for less than six weeks or chronic if present for more than six weeks.

## Anal fissure anatomy



Once a fissure develops, the internal anal sphincter typically goes into spasm, causing further separation of the tear, constricting blood flow to the area, impairing healing, and causing pain.

## Symptoms

Patients with an anal fissure may first note bleeding and a sensation of tearing, ripping, or burning following a bowel movement. Once a fissure develops, these symptoms can occur after every bowel movement; the rectal pain can be severe and can last several minutes to hours.

Bleeding is usually of a small volume, though it is often bright red. However, the bleeding may discolor the toilet bowl, giving it the appearance of heavy bleeding. Some patients also note itching or irritation of the skin around the anus.

## Treatment

Medical and surgical treatments are aimed at reducing the tone of the internal sphincter muscle, leading to pain relief and healing of the anal fissure. People with a new anal fissure may resolve this ailment without medical treatment, though a higher rate of cure is associated with treatment by a physician. By contrast, those with a chronic anal fissure usually require medical intervention.

Fiber supplements, laxatives and topical ointments may also help