

# Circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy

**Understanding NICE guidance –  
information for people considering the  
procedure, and for the public**

December 2003



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**Issue date:** December 2003

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Website: [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

ISBN: 978-1-4731-8304-9

Published by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence  
December 2003

Typeset by Icon Design, Eton

Printed by Abba Litho Sales Limited, London

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## About this information

This information describes the guidance that the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued to the NHS on a procedure called circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy. It is not a complete description of what is involved in the procedure – the patient's healthcare team should describe it in detail.

NICE has looked at whether circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy is safe enough and works well enough for it to be used routinely for the treatment of haemorrhoids (also called piles).

To produce this guidance, NICE has:

- looked at the results of studies on the safety of circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy and how well it works
- asked experts for their opinion
- asked the views of the organisations that speak for the healthcare professionals and the patients and carers who will be affected by this guidance.

This guidance is part of NICE's work on 'interventional procedures' (see 'Further information' on page 10).

## About circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy

Haemorrhoids are swollen blood vessels around the anus (where they are called external haemorrhoids), or inside the lower part of the rectum (where they are called internal haemorrhoids). They often develop during pregnancy or because of straining when the person has constipation. Internal haemorrhoids can protrude out of the anus, and this may cause itching, bleeding and pain.

The usual treatments for haemorrhoids include steroid creams and a high-fibre diet or laxatives to prevent constipation. If these do not work, the haemorrhoids and nearby tissues can be removed in an operation. Circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy is a newer treatment for internal haemorrhoids. A special circular stapler is inserted into the rectum, to cut out a circular strip of the lining of the rectum (which is called the rectal mucosa) above the haemorrhoids. This reduces the blood supply to the haemorrhoids, so that they shrink.

## How well it works

### What the studies said

The results of the studies showed that people who had circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy had less pain and were able to go back to everyday activities sooner than people who had the usual type of surgery for haemorrhoids. In one study, people who had the procedure went back to work an average of 6 days later, and people who had the usual surgery went back after an average of 15 days.

### What the experts said

The experts said that many surgeons were already doing this procedure, and that it worked as well as the usual type of surgery. But there was not much information on whether haemorrhoids were likely to return months or years after the procedure.

## **Risks and possible problems**

### **What the studies said**

Problems such as bleeding after the procedure were less common with circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy than with the usual type of surgery.

### **What the experts said**

The experts said that there had been worries that the stapler could damage the anus, or the wall of the rectum underneath the mucosa. But these did not seem to be problems in practice.

## What has NICE decided?

NICE has considered the evidence on circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy. It has recommended that when doctors use it for people with internal haemorrhoids, they should be sure that:

- the patient understands what is involved and agrees (consents) to the treatment, and
- the results of the procedure are monitored.

Doctors who want to carry out circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy should have special training.



## What the decision means for you

Your doctor may have offered you circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy. NICE has considered this procedure because it is relatively new. NICE has decided that the procedure is safe enough and works well enough for use in the NHS. Nonetheless, you should understand the benefits and risks of circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy before you agree to it. Your doctor should discuss the benefits and risks with you. Some of these benefits and risks may be described in this booklet.

## Further information

You have the right to be fully informed and to share in decision-making about the treatment you receive. You may want to discuss this guidance with the doctors and nurses looking after you.

You can visit the NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)) for further information about the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Interventional Procedures Programme. A copy of the full guidance on circular stapled haemorrhoidectomy is on the NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk/IPG034guidance](http://www.nice.org.uk/IPG034guidance)), or you can order a copy from the website or by telephoning the NHS Response Line on 0870 1555 455 and quoting reference number N0403. The evidence that NICE considered in developing this guidance is also available from the NICE website.

If you want more information on haemorrhoids, a good starting point is NHS Direct, telephone 0845 4647, or NHS Direct Online ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)).

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