YOUR GPS CAN TREAT THESE CONDITIONS!

In January 2014, Eastern
Health Alliance (EHA) launched
the GPFirst programme to
encourage patients in the eastern
region of Singapore to see their
general practitioners (or GPs)
for mild to moderate medical
conditions. In this regular series,
our EHA community GPs step in to
help with common ailments *Caring*readers might face.

Visit www.gpfirst.sg or see your GP for more information on common conditions such as cuts, bruises, mild scalds, nausea, nosebleeds, colds, insect bites, headaches, sprains and fevers. Read on to learn more about haemorrhoids and conjunctivitis.

HAEMORRHOIDS

Question: I am a 56-year-old housewife. About two weeks ago, I started experiencing pain in my rectum and suspect I could be having piles. There is also fresh red blood every time I pass motion. The pain and discomfort have affected my sleep as well. Can my GP treat my condition?

Answer: You could be suffering from haemorrhoids or an anal fissure. Such conditions are best reviewed by a GP as he/she will be able to assess your symptoms



and check to determine whether it is one of the above conditions.

Haemorrhoids, which are commonly known as piles, are due to a dilated blood vessel around the anal region (generally, there are internal and external piles). The dilated veins get irritated while passing motion. Haemorrhoids are associated with constipation, obesity, pregnancy and prolonged sitting. Medication like Daflon and a suppository to protect the vein can help to relieve the pain and bleeding. If the condition becomes advanced, surgery may be required.

An anal fissure is a small tear near the anus. This will require protection cream that will allow the surface tear to heal. Some patients may need antibiotics to treat the infection due to the wound. However, such symptoms could also be an indicator for other problems like colorectal cancer. Patients above 50 years old belong to



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the at-risk group. It is ideal to seek a GP for treatment and to perform any further investigation or examination if necessary. Some lifestyle advice to take note of:

- Do not hold bowels for too long and prevent constipation. Straining will increase pressure that makes piles worse.
- Avoid staying too long in the toilet.
 Prolonged sitting on the toilet will lead to prolonged straining.
- Maintain a high-fibre diet and increase fluid intake to help to prevent constipation.
- Exercise regularly to improve digestion and blood circulation.

By **Dr Lim Kim Show**

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Question: I am a 27-year-old male. I've been wearing contact lenses every day for the past five years, and recently I noticed my left eye has started tearing a lot. Two days ago, I developed sore eyes. I have tried using Optrex eye drops but it is not getting better. This morning, I started to have discharge from my left eye, and it is causing me some pain. I am worried that my vision will get affected, but unsure whether I should go to the A&E for situations like this.

Answer: You are probably having an infection in the eye, which could lead to keratitis or inflammation of the cornea. Although it can be potentially serious, it can be treated by your GP first. Contact lenses, although used safely by millions, can cause eye infection for some people. Keratitis is the most serious complication of contact lens wear and can be due to herpes, bacterial or fungal infections, and occasionally other microbes. In severe cases, it can lead to corneal scarring that impairs vision, and may

lead to the need for a corneal transplant. Hence, always seek your GP's advice.

Your GP will assess your condition and ask whether there has been any recent change of habits with regard to your contact lens use, for example, longer usage or a change of lens cleanser. Your GP will also check your vision to see if your condition warrants a referral to the hospital. If the infection is mild, you will be given antibiotic drops and your GP will keep a close follow up to ensure that you recover.

Safe handling, storage and cleaning of your lenses are key steps to reducing your risk of a keratitis infection. Be aware of factors that can cause infection in contact lens users:

- Use of extended-wear lenses
- Sleeping in your contact lenses
- Reduced tear exchange under the lens
- Environmental factors (such as the haze)
- Poor hygiene, including poor maintenance of contact lens cases or reusing or topping off contact lens solution. Always keep your hands clean.

By **Dr Theresa Yap**



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