

# Patient information

# Anal Fissures

## What is it?

A longitudinal tear in the squamous epithelial lining of the anal canal, typically located in the anterior & posterior midline.

## Causes

- Constipation (most common)
- Post-partum
- Anal trauma / insertion

## Symptoms & Signs

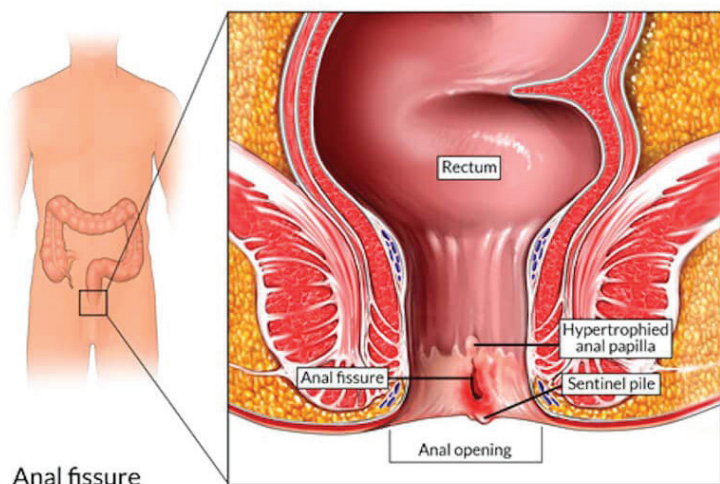
- Anal pain, burning, itch
- PR bleeding (small volume, often on toilet paper only)
- Visible tear on anal inspection
- 'Sentinel' anal skin tag
- There is often a preceding / concurrent history of constipation or other anal trauma

## Differential Diagnosis

- Infection (Anorectal Sepsis)
- Malignancy
- Inflammatory bowel disease (especially Crohn's disease)
- Granulomatous disease
- Venereal disease
- Dermatologic conditions (e.g. psoriasis)

## Red Flags

- Multiple (>1) fissures simultaneously
- Atypical location (i.e. off midline)
- Non-healing
- Associated mass or other irregularity
- Pediatric / Teenage
- Family history of IBD
- Larger volume PR bleeding



Anal fissure

86 Kareena Road, CARINGBAH NSW 2229  
Ph: 02 9717 0000

[kareenaprivate.com.au](http://kareenaprivate.com.au)

## Treatment

### Rationale for Treatment Modalities

- The majority of anal fissures are 'high-pressure' fissures.
- An acute tear in anal canal causes reactive spasm of the underlying anal sphincter ('high-pressure'), resulting in decreased blood flow to the region, inhibiting healing.
- Healing is further inhibited by repeated anal trauma (e.g. from recurrent constipation).

### Non-operative / 1<sup>st</sup> Line Treatment

Prevent repeat anal trauma

- Stool softeners (dietary fibre)

Topical treatments (improve blood flow to site of fissure)

- Nitrates (e.g. Rectogesic)
- Calcium channel blockers (e.g. Diltiazem)

Symptomatic relief

- Sitz bath
- Topical lignocaine

Non-operative treatment can take up to 6 weeks to produce complete healing

### Operative (if failed non-operative treatment)

Inter-sphincteric Botulinum toxin

Lateral Internal Sphincterotomy

Flap repair (for low/normal pressure fissure)

## When to Refer

- Persistent symptoms after 6 weeks of non-operative treatment
- Red flag symptoms



### Dr Katherine Zhu

MBBS MS FRACS FCSSANZ

#### General Surgery

Suite 30  
20-24 Gibbs St  
Miranda, NSW, 2228  
Westmead Specialist Centre  
P 1300 88 24 75  
F 1300 88 24 76

Dr Katherine Zhu is a colorectal and general surgeon, specializing in minimally invasive surgery. She graduated from the University of New South Wales with Honours.