



HEALTHIER, LONGER,
BETTER LIVES

**CANCER ISSUE
#001**



**BLOOD IN THE STOOL?
HAEMORRHOIDS OR
COLORECTAL CANCER?**



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ARE THERE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAEMORRHOIDS AND COLORECTAL CANCER



Haemorrhoids are a common health condition in a developed city like Hong Kong. As blood in the stool is a particularly alarming symptom of both haemorrhoids and colorectal cancer, one might wonder that if haemorrhoids could turn cancerous if left untreated. While haemorrhoids and colon cancer are two very different conditions, their symptoms both warrant special attention.

Haemorrhoids are formed by the small blood vessels and connective tissue of the anus. Affected by factors such as long-term constipation, forceful defaecation (i.e., straining), prolonged sitting and aging, the blood circulation around the anus may become obstructed, or the surrounding tissue weakened, causing anal tissues to swell, and therefore haemorrhoids to form. On the other hand, colorectal cancer is associated with abnormal growth of the inner lining of the colon, developing into polyps which may mutate into tumours. Haemorrhoids and colorectal cancer are therefore completely different pathologies.



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However, both haemorrhoids and colorectal cancer share the same symptom of rectal bleeding, usually first noticed as blood in the stool when wiping after a bowel movement. Blood from haemorrhoids is usually bright red and may be accompanied by pain; while blood from tumours in the rectum and colon is usually darker red or black. Additionally, individuals with haemorrhoids and colorectal cancer may experience constipation. Typical symptoms of colorectal cancer include abdominal pain, sudden changes in bowel habits and unexplained weight loss.

FRIENDLY REMINDER

Although there is no causal relationship between haemorrhoids and colorectal cancer, certain risk factors are associated with both pathologies, such as a high-calorie diet with inadequate intake of fruit, vegetable and dairy, and lack of exercise. To reduce the risk of colorectal cancer, or if indeed abnormal symptoms such as bloody stools appear, it is important to discuss this with your doctor.

Source : Hong Kong Integrated Oncology Centre

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