



## **Anal Abscess / Fistula**

An Anal Abscess is a painful, infected cavity filled with pus located near the anus or rectum. If the abscess is large, a person may develop a fever, chills, or a general ill feeling.

An Anal Fistula is a small tunnel which starts inside the anus and usually exits at one or more places on the skin of the buttocks, outside the anus. A fistula is almost always a result of a prior abscess. Common symptoms of a fistula include irritation of the skin around the anus, itching, and drainage of mucus or stool.

An abscess is caused by an infection of a small gland just inside the anus. Bacteria or foreign matter enters the tissue through the gland. Certain conditions, such as colitis or other inflammation of the intestine, can sometimes make these infections more likely.

In order for an abscess to heal, the pus must be released from the cavity. This is usually done by making an opening through the skin near the anus to relieve pressure, allowing the pus to drain. If the abscess is small and near the surface of the skin, this usually can be accomplished in the doctor's office using a local anesthetic. A very large or deep abscess may require a more extensive procedure with anesthesia. In those circumstances, the drainage procedure is performed in the hospital. Generally, antibiotics are unnecessary and are not an alternative to draining the abscess.

Symptom relief is rapid and dramatic, after the drainage procedure. The abscess may continue to drain for several weeks until the infection is gone, and the cavity which contained pus has a chance to completely heal.