

Keeping It Clean: Should I use soap on my anus?

Soap may be an important part of one's bathing routine, but do I need to wash my anus? The short answer is no. The longer answer is also no! To elaborate, would you clean your eye with soap? The anus, although the butt of many jokes, is a very sensitive area. No soap in the eye. No soap on (or in) the anus).

As on other parts of the body, soap and fragrance can be damaging to delicate skin. However, the solution to better hygienic habits is simpler than one might think.

The only thing you really need is access to clean water.

AVOID SUDS, SCENTS & SCRUBBING

The anus is remarkably self-cleaning, and should be treated with as much care as other sensitive areas of the body. Traditional soaps and cleansers are too harsh to apply directly, especially combined with the rough act of scrubbing.

Many self-care products have fragrances and other additives that can irritate the area. Polishing yourself clean may be tempting, but may cause small cuts and fissures. If you are already suffering from hemorrhoids, all these things can aggravate your symptoms.

(Go right ahead and skip the extra expense of scented toilet paper, too.)

A FRESH START

In most cases, the best remedy to clean (if you must) is as close as your faucet. Water will easily wash away any particulates without causing abrasions or irritation. If you must use something other than plain water, witch hazel or Balneol® can be used in conjunction with your bath or shower.

WHAT CAN I USE IF I DON'T HAVE TIME TO HOP IN THE SHOWER?

If we were always clean "down there", we would not need underwear. But, we are not meant to always be totally clean. Therefore, a good pair of underwear will take care of any areas you missed after using the restroom. In between shower routines, you may

resort to witch-hazel or flushable baby-wipes, but be sure they are unscented and free of any additives like alcohol. Even the best wipe can dry out your skin—be aware of how hard you may be scrubbing, too. It's easy to get carried away.

You may feel like wipes and water are not enough, but it is vital to remember that micro-abrasions can quickly turn into a bigger issue. Fissures and open cuts.

STAY AWAY FROM HARSH PRODUCTS AND PROCEDURES:

The science is in. Complicated procedures like bleaching or other deep cleaning methods will only put you at risk. Even if you can't see or feel the effects right away, harsh products will weaken and dry out the sensitive areas you're working so hard to care, coddle and beautify.

The bottles of douching solution seen in feminine hygiene aisles may also be tempting, but these products have too much fragrance to be considered safe for your delicate tushy.

The down-and-dirty secret:

- Water Water Water!
- Baby-wipes, witch hazel or Balneol® are OK.
- Do NOT scrub or polish (be gentle with delicate skin.)
- Avoid scented products (including douches and other related materials.)

Why soap shouldn't be your go-to:

- Soap products will dry out the area.
- Dry skin can lead to fissures, micro-abrasions, and hemorrhoids.
- Fragrances and additives will only increase any discomfort you may already feel.

And, as always, should you feel that you may have caused a problem by too much vigorous polishing "down there", call your proctologist.

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