

**DEFINITION**

1. **Pruritus ani** is a condition of intractable itching around the anus.

**CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS**

2. The main feature is the intense irritation.
3. Usually, the perianal skin is reddened and may become cracked and moist.

**AETIOLOGY**

4. Poor cleanliness or incorrect hygiene.
5. Anal or perianal discharge which renders the anus moist. Underlying lesions include anal fissure, fistula-in-ano, internal or external haemorrhoids, genital warts and excessive ingestion of liquid paraffin. Mucous discharge is an intense pruritic agent and so any cause of a mucous discharge (eg mucous secreting polyps) may be the cause of pruritus.
6. Vaginal discharge, for example as due to trichomonas vaginalis.
7. Parasites such as threadworm; scabies and pediculosis pubis may also infest the anal region.
8. Epidermophytosis (fungal skin infection) is a common cause, especially if the skin between the toes is also infected.
9. The condition may be a manifestation of an allergic diathesis, in which case there is likely to be a history of other allergic manifestations such as urticaria, hay fever, or asthma. Antibiotic therapy may be a precipitating factor.
10. Local irritation from the wearing of unsuitable underclothing (rough or woollen garments).
11. Skin diseases localised to the perianal skin, such as psoriasis, lichen planus, and contact dermatitis.
12. Excess perianal sweating, including that due to obesity, or excess perianal hair.
13. Bacterial infection due to intertrigo or erythrasma. Diabetes mellitus may be relevant to the establishment of bacterial skin infections, just as it may be at other body sites.
14. Psychoneurotic illness. In some neuroses, a pain/pleasure complex develops, the pleasure being the scratching.

## **CONCLUSION**

15. **Pruritus ani** is a condition of intractable itching around the anus. There are many causes, these having been listed above.

## **REFERENCE**

Mann C V and Russell R C G (Eds). *Bailey and Love's Short Practice of Surgery*. 21<sup>st</sup> Ed. 1992. London. Chapman & Hall Medical. p1263 - 1264.

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