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### **Sphincterotomy**

#### **What is a sphincterotomy?**

A sphincterotomy is a procedure performed to treat anal fissures. An anal fissure is a split in the lining of the rectum, possibly resulting from a hard bowel movement. Muscle spasms and subsequent bowel movements prevent healing. Fissures can be encouraged to heal using topical medications and stool softeners, but severe or recurring fissures may require a sphincterectomy.

During a sphincterotomy, the outermost part of the anal sphincter is cut. This weakens the muscle and relieves the muscle spasms which prevents healing. A sphincterotomy may be performed in a hospital or clinic.

#### **Details of the procedure**

##### **What type of anesthesia will be used?**

You will have a pre-operative interview with an anesthesiologist, who will ask you questions regarding your medical history. A Sphincterotomy may be performed using general or local anesthesia. With a general anesthetic, you will be asleep during surgery. With a local anesthetic, you will be alert during the surgery, and only the incision location will be anesthetized. Your surgeon and anesthesiologist will determine the best option for you.

##### **What happens on the day of surgery?**

You will report to a pre-operative nursing unit, where you will change into a gown. A nurse will review your chart and confirm that all paperwork is in order. Before any medications are administered, your surgeon will verify your name and the type of procedure you are having. You will then be taken to the operating room. After the appropriate form of anesthesia is administered, surgery will be performed.

##### **What happens during the surgery, how is the surgery performed?**

First, any skin tags associated with the fissure are removed. Then, an incision is carefully made on the anal sphincter. This relaxes the sphincter and allows stretching, so that less strain is placed on the fissure.

##### **What happens after the surgery, and how long will I be in the hospital?**

Once the surgery is completed, you will be taken to a post-operative or recovery unit. Your length of stay will depend on the complexity of the procedure. Most patients return home on the same day.

Your doctor will explain the procedure for post-operative care. This will involve keeping the operated area clean and dry, eating a high fiber diet, drinking plenty of fluids, and using stools softeners.

##### **What are the risks associated with a sphincterotomy?**

As with any surgery, there are risks such as bleeding, infection, or an adverse reaction to anesthesia. There is also the possibility of an abscess or fistula formation, or the inability to control gas and bowel movements. Your doctor will discuss these risks in detail.

##### **What should I watch out for?**

Be sure to call your doctor if any of the following symptoms appear:

- Bleeding
- Fever
- Redness, warmth, or swelling around the incision
- Drainage from the incision

##### **When can I return to work and resume normal activities?**

Patients usually resume normal activities after one to two weeks. Full recovery may take as long as two months.

**NB!!! IF THE WARD DID NOT BOOK A FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT, PLEASE CALL THE ROOMS TO DO SO.**