

Sweetening ... the pain: The role of sugar in acutely prolapsed haemorrhoids

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Abstract

Haemorrhoids are considered among the most frequent proctological condition at a general practitioner (GP) practice. Acute prolapse of internal haemorrhoids is presented with oedema, inflammation and acute pain. The application of granulated sugar on swollen haemorrhoids leads to an immediate reduction of their edema and to the patient's relief. After the topical application of sugar, haemorrhoids begin to shrink immediately and edema is drastically reduced, while haemorrhoidal tissue can easily retracted back into the anal canal. The method is a cheap, quick and painless way to control the worsening symptoms such as swelling, bleeding and irritation. In addition, this method can easily be applied in the GP practice without the necessity of any form of anaesthesia. *Clin Ter 2021; 172 (6):e520-522. doi: 10.7417/CT.2021.2369*

Key words: prolapsed haemorrhoid, sugar, edema, osmosis, internal haemorrhoid

symptoms can be very incapacitating for several weeks, in case it is decided not to be untreated and the conservative management is opted. As conservative treatment are defined all the non surgical therapies which can include analgesia, hot sitz baths, bed rest, topical application of ice packs, stool softeners as well as soothing topical applications (4). Among the latter, in the literature has been proposed the topical application of hyperosmotic substances in order to reduce oedema through osmosis (5). Among these substances is also the granulated sugar. Granulated sugar is used in an attempt to create a desiccant effect, as well as to create a fluid shift across the edematous haemorrhoids. The increased presence of sugar around the haemorrhoidal tissues results in this fluid shift leading to an edema reduction. This is dictated by osmotic gradients where a fluid shift is initiated, when low-concentration solvent shifts selectively into a region of higher solute concentration created by the granulated sugar placed around the protruding haemorrhoids (6).

Technique

This technique may be applied at GP practice without any anaesthesia. Patient is examined in left lateral position. The application of granulated sugar onto swollen haemorrhoids leads to an immediate edema reduction and subsequent relief (Fig. 1A-1F). After the topical application of sugar, haemorrhoids shrink and edema is drastically reduced. Sugar absorbs the extra water by osmotically drawing out the fluid. At the same time, the area needs to be constantly covered with sugar. Gentle manual pressure on the haemorrhoids makes the procedure more efficient. The patient seems to experience minimal pain or discomfort during the operation. After 10 minutes of application, the difference is noticeable with the naked eye. The protruding haemorrhoids gradually become significantly smaller. Eventually, the prolapsed haemorrhoid is easily reduced back into the anal canal. This treatment does not apply in thrombosed external haemorrhoids due to the fact that the skin, that covers external haemorrhoids, inhibits the water shifting effect of sugar.

Dear Editor,

Haemorrhoids are among the most frequent proctological conditions at a general practitioner (GP) practice. Their incidence in general population range between 4.4% and 36.4% (1). Haemorrhoids are vascular cushions which close anal canal and empty during defecation allowing stool passage (2). These formations are adhered to the anal wall through fibrous ligaments. When these fibrous attachments degenerate, haemorrhoids may prolapse out of the anal canal, engorge and bleed. Prolapsed haemorrhoids are classified by their location as internal or external (3). Prolapsed internal haemorrhoids are always covered by intestinal mucosa. On the other hand, external haemorrhoids originate below the dentate line and are covered by skin.

Acute prolapse of internal haemorrhoids, due to obstruction of venous return and stasis, is presented with oedema, inflammation and acute pain (4). The aforementioned

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Fig. 1. Acute prolapse of internal haemorrhoids before (A, C, E) and after (B, D, F) the application of granulated sugar.

In conclusion, pushing a prolapsed or protruding haemorrhoid through the anal opening usually results in pain and irritation. Granulated sugar seems to be an effective way to reduce edema in many patients even with stage IV prolapsed internal haemorrhoids. The technique is cheap, quick and painless. However, the improvement is not permanent, and its duration is rather short. The use of sugar did not cause any side effects or allergies to any of the patients and, eventually, the majority of them return shortly to their activities.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

Financial Disclosure: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

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