

# Why Smartphone Use on the Toilet Increases Hemorrhoid Risk

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Hemorrhoids affect millions of Americans each year, and sitting too long on the toilet is among the hidden triggers
- › Using a smartphone in the bathroom raises hemorrhoid risk by 46% because it keeps you seated longer without pelvic support
- › People who use their phones are far more likely to sit over five minutes per trip, even though many don't realize their habit is adding time
- › Younger adults are the most frequent toilet phone users, meaning their risk of hemorrhoids builds earlier in life
- › Simple changes — like leaving your phone outside the bathroom, adjusting toilet sitting positions, staying hydrated, and walking daily — help prevent painful flare-ups

Hemorrhoids develop when the veins in your rectum swell under too much pressure, leading to discomfort, itching, bleeding, and sometimes severe pain. Left unchecked, they progress into chronic irritation, repeated flare-ups, and, in serious cases, the need for surgery. What many people overlook is how small daily habits drive this process.

Sitting too long on the toilet is one of the biggest triggers, yet it often slips under the radar because it feels so harmless. The posture itself places constant downward force on those veins, and without pelvic support, they stay engorged until the tissue breaks down.

This is where modern life makes things worse. Smartphones have turned bathroom trips into extended breaks, and for many, the device has become a default companion. What seems like a few extra minutes of scrolling or reading news is enough to magnify the strain day after day.

Recognizing that connection is the first step to protecting yourself. By looking at how your daily choices shape even the most routine bodily functions, you start to see why new research has raised fresh concerns about hemorrhoids and how to prevent them.

## **Smartphones on the Toilet Raise Your Hemorrhoid Risk**

A study published in PLOS One examines whether using a smartphone while on the toilet increases your risk of hemorrhoids.<sup>1</sup> The research team at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston surveyed adults undergoing [colonoscopy](#) about their bathroom behaviors, including phone use, diet, exercise, and bowel habits. They then compared those self-reports with colonoscopy findings, giving this investigation an unusually reliable foundation since the diagnosis of hemorrhoids was confirmed endoscopically.

- **The population studied was middle-aged and older adults** – A total of 125 people participated, with an average age in the mid-50s to early 60s. About two-thirds admitted to bringing their phones into the bathroom, while one-third did not. Even though all were at the same clinic for colonoscopy, smartphone users had some key differences. They were younger on average, and they tended to exercise less each week compared to those who left their phones outside the bathroom.
- **Phones lengthen bathroom time** – The research revealed that 37.3% of smartphone users spent more than five minutes per bathroom visit compared to just 7.1% of non-users. This was one of the most striking contrasts in the study. Even more interesting, only about a third of those people acknowledged that their phone use caused them to sit longer, showing a clear disconnect between perception and behavior.

- **The prevalence of hemorrhoids was high, especially among phone users** – Endoscopic exams showed that 43% of all participants had **hemorrhoids**. When the data was analyzed further, smartphone use on the toilet stood out as an independent risk factor.

After controlling for age, sex, body mass index, straining, fiber intake, and exercise, smartphone use still increased the risk of hemorrhoids by 46%. This means the phone habit itself – rather than lifestyle or diet – was driving the increased risk.

- **The most common activities were reading news and browsing social media** – More than half of users said they scrolled through news, while 44.4% checked **social media** while on the toilet. These activities are open-ended, with no natural stopping point, making it easy for minutes to slip away unnoticed. Unlike reading a magazine article or newspaper column, a smartphone's endless feed prolongs sitting time.

## **Time Spent on the Toilet Was More Predictive Than Straining**

Historically, straining during bowel movements has been considered the main risk factor for hemorrhoids. Yet this study found no significant difference in straining between phone users and non-users.<sup>2</sup> Instead, sitting time emerged as the stronger predictor. This suggests your posture and the uninterrupted pressure of **sitting on a toilet** seat matter more than whether you strain.

- **Prolonged sitting makes veins swell** – Toilets are designed with an open seat, offering no support to your **pelvic floor**. Prolonged sitting in this position places continuous downward pressure on your rectal veins. Over time, that pressure enlarges the vascular cushions inside your rectum, leading to hemorrhoids. Sitting in a chair, by contrast, distributes pressure more evenly and offers pelvic support, which is why **desk work** does not have the same effect.
- **Smartphone users also had lower levels of physical activity** – Toilet phone users reported less weekly exercise compared to non-users. This could indicate that heavy smartphone use in daily life reflects broader sedentary patterns. Reduced

circulation from lack of movement slows healing and raises vulnerability to vein swelling, compounding the impact of longer bathroom sessions.

- **Age played a role in smartphone use on the toilet** — People closer to age 55 were far more likely to use smartphones in the bathroom than those in their 60s. This shift reflects generational differences in technology habits. While younger adults associate bathroom time with multitasking, older adults were more likely to treat it as a quick necessity. This means your habits now — especially if you're in your 30s, 40s, or 50s — could set the stage for hemorrhoids much earlier in life.
- **The risks are preventable** — Limiting bathroom phone use to less than five minutes lowers the risk significantly. The researchers also emphasized that awareness is half the battle, since many users did not realize their devices were prolonging toilet time. By setting small goals — such as leaving your phone outside the bathroom — you take control of your health and cut down on behaviors that silently add to rectal pressure.

## **How to Fix the Habits That Lead to Hemorrhoids**

If you've ever felt the sting, itch, or bleeding of hemorrhoids, you know how disruptive they are to your daily life. The good news is that this condition is not random — it grows out of habits that put too much pressure on the veins in your rectum. That means you have real control here. The fastest way to feel better and prevent flare-ups is to stop the behaviors that keep those veins swollen in the first place. Here are five steps that help:

- 1. Leave your phone outside the bathroom** — If you scroll through news or social media while sitting on the toilet, it's time to break the habit. The longer you sit, the more pressure you load onto those veins. Keep your trips short — under five minutes. Think of it as a personal challenge: how quickly and comfortably can you finish without distraction?

- 2. Change your posture for better elimination** — Your body is not designed to empty fully when you sit with your knees below your hips. That kinks your rectum and forces straining. Instead, **mimic a squat**. Place your feet on a stool, lean forward with your elbows on your knees, or cross one leg over the other. These small shifts straighten out your colon so stool moves easily, cutting down on pain and swelling.
- 3. Eat and drink to keep stools soft** — If your gut is sensitive, skip fiber-heavy grains for now. Focus on easier-to-digest sources like fruit and white rice. These foods feed your gut bacteria and help restore energy production inside your cells, which supports a strong gut lining and smoother elimination.

Once your gut is healthy, gradually add in more **fiber-rich foods**. Also drink water throughout the day — aim for enough so your urine is pale yellow. This simple step keeps your stool soft and prevents straining.

- 4. Move your body every day** — If you're mostly sedentary, your blood flow slows and healing takes longer. Walking is the simplest fix. A daily walk boosts circulation to your pelvic area, helps regulate digestion, and reduces the pressure that builds up when you sit too long. Yoga is another option, with poses that open the hips and ease rectal pressure. During hemorrhoid flare-ups, avoid cycling and heavy weightlifting since they press directly on your rectal area.
- 5. Treat bathroom time as a quick reset, not a break** — If you think of the toilet as your place to catch up on reading or messages, it's time to reframe. Your bathroom is not a lounge. Use it strictly for elimination, then stand up and move on with your day. To reinforce this, try setting a timer or challenging yourself to keep every bathroom visit under five minutes. The consistency of this practice is what keeps your veins from swelling again.

## **FAQs About Using a Smartphone on the Toilet**

**Q: Why does using a smartphone on the toilet increase hemorrhoid risk?**

**A:** Using your phone keeps you sitting longer than necessary. The toilet seat provides no pelvic support, so prolonged sitting increases pressure on your rectal veins. Over time, this pressure causes your veins to swell, leading to hemorrhoids.

**Q: How much longer do people sit when they use their phones in the bathroom?**

**A:** Research shows that 37.3% of smartphone users sit more than five minutes per visit, compared to only 7.1% of non-users. The added minutes are enough to create significant strain that raises hemorrhoid risk.

**Q: Is straining or sitting time more important in causing hemorrhoids?**

**A:** The study found that sitting time was a stronger predictor than straining. Even when people did not strain, simply sitting longer with a phone in hand raised the risk by 46%.

**Q: What daily habits help reduce hemorrhoid flare-ups?**

**A:** Five key steps include leaving your phone outside the bathroom, mimicking a squat posture for easier elimination, eating gut-friendly foods like fruit and white rice, staying hydrated, and moving your body daily with walking or yoga.

**Q: Can hemorrhoids be prevented if I already use my phone on the toilet?**

**A:** Yes. Limiting bathroom time to under five minutes, adjusting your posture, improving your diet, and staying active all reduce pressure on your veins. Even small changes, like setting a timer or treating bathroom time as a quick reset instead of a break, make a big difference.

## Sources and References

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- [1, 2 PLOS One September 3, 2025, 20\(9\): e0329983](#)