

## Sawbones 156: Hemorrhoids

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### **Intro (Clint McElroy):**

*Sawbones* is a show about medical history and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun.

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Just sit back, relax and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[Intro, theme music plays]

### **Justin:**

Hello, everybody and welcome to *Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine*. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

### **Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

### **Justin:**

[deep inhale] I'm ready, Sydnee.

### **Sydnee:**

You're... You're ready?

### **Justin:**

Yeah, that's—

### **Sydnee:**

Well that's- I mean, that's good. We've like started the show. We've started recording.

### **Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

You did the intro thing.

**Justin:**

As we discussed, I'm ready. I'm ready to touch a nation—

**Sydnee:**

Well, careful there.

**Justin:**

... and- Well, not like that.

**Sydnee:**

Did you ask permission first?

**Justin:**

No. I'm ready to touch the nation and inspire several generations of people with my—

**Sydnee:**

Just several. [laughs]

**Justin:**

... honesty and heroism.

**Sydnee:**

Not any to come. Only the current ones?

**Justin:**

The current ones. I'm... I'm realistic about my scope.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. What... Do you feel like it's time to inspire people? Like we need that right now?

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. This has been a hard year and I feel like now more than ever, people need it to... I'm gonna use a word, it's gonna sound too strong but it's the only one that's appropriate... heroes.

**Sydnee:**

You mean—

**Justin:**

People need heroes.

**Sydnee:**

People need a hero.

**Justin:**

People need a hero.

**Sydnee:**

They need... They need the he- The leader that they need.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Not the leader that they want.

**Justin:**

Leader, Sydnee, I don't know if I deserve that mantle.

**Sydnee:**

Oh.

**Justin:**

I just... I'm gonna just say it. My name is Justin McElroy and I'm living with hemorrhoids.

**Sydnee:**

Justin, that was very brave of you.

**Justin:**

Thank you, [laughs] Sydnee.

**Sydnee:**

That [laughs]... Do you have meetings where you have to stand up and say that?

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

Well, we can't... Well, we actually stand up for the whole thing.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

So you don't actually have to stand up because everybody's already standing.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Thank you for sharing that. I know that was hard.

**Justin:**

Well, it's okay. I wanted to inspire a generation.

**Sydnee:**

Good. Well that's... That's what we need right now. That's the kind of honesty that people are looking for. That's the kinda inspiration-

**Justin:**

Heroic honesty.

**Sydnee:**

Right. Uh, to stand up and say, "I have... I have butt balls." [laughs]

**Justin:**

I don't actually know what they are.

**Sydnee:**

What hemorrhoids are?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Um—

**Justin:**

I, it's a thing, I know I got `em, for sure.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm, yeah.

**Justin:**

For sure.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

But...

**Sydnee:**

I mean, you seem really convinced you—

**Justin:**

Yeah...

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. You've got `em.

**Justin:**

But I don't know what they are.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm. Well, you wanna know?

**Justin:**

I guess?

**Sydnee:**

Okay. I'll tell you.

**Justin:**

I mean, we've come this far.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Let's go. Thank you to everybody who suggested... [laughs] Thank you, people who wrote in and said—

**Justin:**

Thank you, you dirty freaks.

**Sydnee:**

... "Please tell me about hemorrhoids." Grace—

**Justin:**

You're nasty.

**Sydnee:**

... and Matthew and Hanna and Rachel and Michael and Susan-

**Justin:**

You're all nasty.

**Sydnee:**

... and Sarah. We got your number. We know what's up.

**Justin:**

Nasty dogs.

**Sydnee:**

This was a topic I cannot believe we haven't covered yet. It was widely requested. Not just by these fine folks, but also on Twitter and Facebook.

**Justin:**

Lots of nasty people.

**Sydnee:**

A lot of... Yeah. A lot of people wanna know about hemorrhoids.

The word hemorrhoids comes from the Greek for "blood" and "flowing."

**Justin:**

Gross.

**Sydnee:**

So, uh—

**Justin:**

Hemo... hemo being the Latin prefix for blood.

**Sydnee:**

There you go. Good job.

**Justin:**

I know that from, um, hemalurgy is of course one of the arts, the metal arts in the *Mistborn* Series—

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh.

**Justin:**

... that is used to transfer powers from one Mistborn to another. Or it can be used- It's different from feruchemy or allomancy, different metal-related magics.

**Sydnee:**

Right. You may also know it from like hemoglobin.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. Or hemo... hemostat.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm.

**Justin:**

Or hemophilia.

**Sydnee:**

There... There you go. Yeah.

**Justin:**

Sure, I know those.

**Sydnee:**

Hemorrhage.

**Justin:**

Hemorrhage.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

We could go on, but...

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] We could go on with other words with this root.

**Justin:**

... I'm not sure it makes for compelling audio.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] That'll be another show where we just list all the words that start with—



**Justin:**

We just list for a half hour, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, they're also known as piles.

**Justin:**

Uh, yeah. I've heard that name. And it's, mm, the worst. [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

It... it's a pretty bad name. I- and also, let me say this- I know that they are called that. I have never heard anyone in my real actual life call them that.

**Justin:**

Do you mean in your real actual doctor professional life or just like your overall...?

**Sydnee:**

Or- Well, not in my professional life and not- I mean, other- Outside of like books, I've read it in.

**Justin:**

Is it maybe a regional thing?

**Sydnee:**

I think it must be a regional thing and I think it's also... I don't wanna say it's outdated because I know some people still say it. But I think it's on its way out.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

I think it is an older term that is less used, less frequently used, today.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

But it must be a regional thing because I have never heard anybody in my day to day talk about "piles."

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

That is, when I reference butt balls, that's because it comes from the Latin "pila" for balls.

**Justin:**

What is it?

**Sydnee:**

So a hemorrhoid. Hemorrhoids are little... They're vascular structures. So they're like dilated blood vessels inside the anal canal.

And they're supposed to help maintain stool continence so that poop just doesn't come out. Like it passes through at a measured pace. Except for sometimes, they can become really swollen and really inflamed.

And that's usually because of increased pressure in those blood vessels just like you can get increased pressure in your legs and you can get like varicose veins and dilated veins in your legs. You can get dilated veins in your anal canal, too.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

And that can happen when you're pregnant, for instance. A lot of pregnant women develop hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

[mumbling] Not that one.

**Sydnee:**

It can happen in liver disease. It could happen if you just have a lot of constipation and you strain a lot.

**Justin:**

[mumbling] Mm, no. No problem there.

**Sydnee:**

So, and then, sometimes, they're just there. You just got `em.

**Justin:**

Because I'm overweight? I know that's an issue, right?

**Sydnee:**

That, that is one risk factor.

**Justin:**

[sadly] Yeah...

**Sydnee:**

So.

**Justin:**

I did not in- I did not maybe count on how singularly unpleasant—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... I would find this to talk about.

**Sydnee:**

I'm empowering you. I'm giving you information about your own body.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

I'm taking the locus of control from external to internal.

**Justin:**

All right. Hit me.

**Sydnee:**

So, speaking of external versus internal [laughing]--

**Justin:**

[snort-laugh]

**Sydnee:**

... those are the two kinds of hemorrhoids. [laughs]

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

I didn't mean to set that up. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Now, how do you know if you've got internal or external hemorrhoids? Well, if you have internal hemorrhoids, you don't feel them.

**Justin:**

Well, I ain't got those.

**Sydnee:**

Okay.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

Cool.

**Justin:**

[laughs/cries]

**Sydnee:**

This is very pleasant for me as well. Internal hemorrhoids, you would know you have them because you may go to the bathroom. Maybe it's a time where you have- you do strain a little. You're a little constipated.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

And afterwards, when you wipe, you see some blood on the toilet paper.

**Justin:**

Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:**

And you didn't, you weren't hurting or anything, but there's some blood.

**Justin:**

Or in the... Or in it?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, or in the stool. That's possible that that's an internal hemorrhoid. Or if you have a colonoscopy, sometimes the doctor will just tell you, "Hey, by the way, you have internal hemorrhoids."

Now, the ones that you feel, the ones that bother people more, probably, are the external hemorrhoids. Those are the ones- And it's just because of where they're located, you can't feel pain in the same way with the internal ones—

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... in that location, that you can with the external ones.

Those are the ones that cause like itching. And they can bleed, too. But more commonly, you're worried about the itching and the pain.

And if they get really big, I mean, you can feel them as they prolapse or kind of stick out...

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... of the rectum. Like you can actually, you know... I, on exam, I can feel them and touch them.

And some people, they get big enough or bothersome enough that when they sit, they can feel them.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

In the US, they affect about 58% of people over the age of 40. They're extremely common. Hemorrhoids are extremely common. Do not be embarrassed or uncomfortable if you have hemorrhoids.

Because many, many people have hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

I guess that makes me feel a little bit better.

**Sydnee:**

It's okay. There... And there's no... There should be no stigma attached to them because I take care of people from all walks of life. All ages and genders. And they have hemorrhoids. So, it just happens.

**Justin:**

Even cool people, maybe?

**Sydnee:**

Lots of cool people. The coolest people, in fact.

**Justin:**

How long have we known about `em?

**Sydnee:**

We have known about hemorrhoids- This dates all the way back to *The Code of Hammurabi* where you see hemorrhoids described.

Which makes me wanna go read that code. Because I thought it had something to do with law and order.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Apparently, my boy is just like blowing it up on every front.

**Sydnee:**

It—

**Justin:**

It's like—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It's like a... a *Poor Richard's Almanac*-

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Is it—

**Justin:**

... of info.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Is that what it- Because I thought it was- It had something about like, cutting somebody's hand off in it?

**Justin:**

It's got that, but it's also like, "While—

**Sydnee:**

It also has the symptoms of hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

[As the *Code of Hammurabi*] "While I have you. While I have your attention..."

**Sydnee:**

[As the *Code of Hammurabi*] "Let me tell you what's going on in my butt."

**Justin:**

[As the *Code of Hammurabi*] "Here's what's up with my butt."

**Sydnee:**

The ancient Egyptians recorded a treatment for hemorrhoids all the way back in 1700 BCE on a papyrus.

And here is a quote from this, "Thou shouldest give a recipe, an ointment of great protection; acacia leaves, ground, triturated and cooked together. Smear a strip of fine linen therewith and place in the anus."

And he recovers immediately.

**Justin:**

[skeptical] Immediately, eh?

**Sydnee:**

Immediately.

**Justin:**

Huh.



**Sydnee:**

Or at least he says, "Please stop putting those things in my anus."

**Justin:**

[As Ancient Egyptian Patient] "Please."

**Sydnee:**

[As Ancient Egyptian Patient] "I think I'm feeling better, doc." [laughs]

**Justin:**

[As Ancient Egyptian Patient] "Uh, you know what? On second thought, I don't have a problem. Goodbye."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] [As Ancient Egyptian Patient] "That was good."

I mean, that doesn't sound unpleasant, I guess.

**Justin:**

Maybe it does work. Maybe that's where we get, uh... Tucks, from.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Well, pro- Actually, some of- Probably with some of these.

**Justin:**

I've actually seen... What... There's one... Well, okay. I don't wanna get ahead of you.

**Sydnee:**

Oh, we'll get there. We'll kinda get there.

**Justin:**

This is an area where I've investigated a few of the cures.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I've done some inde—

**Sydnee:**

You may know some things.

**Justin:**

I've done some independent study.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I just like that it's fine linen.

**Justin:**

Well, yeah. You don't wanna use—

**Sydnee:**

“Take a strip of fine linen.”

**Justin:**

You wanna use that high cotton, that high thread count, down there.

**Sydnee:**

Are you a... Are you a picky toilet paper person, Justin?

**Justin:**

Uh, yeah. I, well, I just went to Consumer Reports and I asked them what the best toilet paper is and I only buy that.

**Sydnee:**

Right. No, I—

**Justin:**

I feel like if you're gonna splurge somewhere, like, don't cut corners there.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] You are... I know that about you. I just wanted you to have to share that. I was always a, “What is the cheapest?” person.

**Justin:**

[yawns] Yeah, that's—

**Sydnee:**

Um—

**Justin:**

That's like... It's, by the way, it's Quilted Northern Ultra Plush.

**Sydnee:**

That's the cheapest or that's the best?

**Justin:**

No. I would never know what the cheapest is.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

I only treat my derriere to the finest.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Here's the way you remember it, folks. Here's a little mnemonic I use. When you're looking for your Quilted Northern Ultra Plush.

**Sydnee:**

We are not... We are not sponsored by them by the way.

**Justin:**

We're not sponsored by them.

**Sydnee:**

It's just Justin's own—

**Justin:**

But go ahead and look for the purple wrapper to remind you to treat your butt like a king. You get that royal purple and that's what you're gonna wanna take home with you.

**Sydnee:**

There you go.

**Justin:**

It's a little extra, but trust me. You're worth it.

**Sydnee:**

We won't give you medical advice, but we will give you advice on the brand of toilet paper [laughs] to purchase.

**Justin:**

Listen. Take it from me. Quilted Northern Ultra Plush.

**Sydnee:**

Hippocrates also had some advice for hemorrhoids. He suggested that you take a needle to hold them in place and then tie them off with a thick woolen thread.

**Justin:**

[holding down panic] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [sarcastic] Good treatment so far, Hippo.

**Sydnee:**

He made a point that you should always leave one behind, which—

**Justin:**

Leave one hemorrhoid behind?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] I suppose that's what he means. Leave one—

**Justin:**

That's good because if you cure `em so well, you forget you ever had them and then you get hubris.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** [laughing] You wanna always remember where you came from.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] With that one.

**Justin:**

That one.

**Sydnee:**

And when you recover, then you put them on a course of hellebore, which was something that would make you puke a lot.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know if that's like punishment now. I don't know. I don't know. You got rid of your hemorrhoids.

Which actually, the idea of tying them off and letting them fall off—

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

... which is basically what he's doing. He's holding them in place with a needle and then just tying them really tightly at the base.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

That's not a crazy idea.

**Justin:**

Really?

**Sydnee:**

No. We'll get there, but that's not... That's not like... Hippocrates kinda had a good idea. Not... I mean, he had a few. Like, we'll give him some credit. He had more than one.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

There was a Roman physician that we've talked about a lot named Celsus. And he actually described even in more detail some of these like ligation—

**Justin:**

[grunts uncomfortably]

**Sydnee:**

... and excision ways of kinda tying things off and then cutting them off, even.

And then some of the possible complications of them. Which, as we move forward, you'll see it's kind of... I mean, like, we still do those procedures today.

I mean, obviously, we don't use like thick woolen thread and hellebore, but same kind of concept.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Galen also writes about hemorrhoids. He talked a lot about trying to cut the connection between arteries and veins.

And I don't know if this was some way to try to reduce them in size by making you... I mean, you'd bleed a lot. [laughs]

But he thought this would avoid pain and also spreading of gangrene, which back then, any surgery was going to increase your chances of...

**Justin:**

Yeah, right.

**Sydnee:**

... that kind of thing. I wouldn't have recommended that.

In addition, he specifically treated Marcus Aurelius for hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

[semi-sarcastic] Oh. What an honor.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, I know. That's a royal butt.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

And he used—

**Justin:**

Only Ancient Quilted Northern Ultra Plush—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... for that derriere.

**Sydnee:**

I'm sure that's what he used.

He used some honey in that effort. He also used an ointment that was made probably again with some honey and then various herbal remedies.

Along with laxatives was a mainstay of treatment and leeches applied... to... the hemorrhoids. [pause for effect] A leech directly—

**Justin:**

I would rather not. No, thank you.

**Sydnee:**

... on your b-hole.

**Justin:**

No. I'm good actually.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] You gotta watch those suckers though if you're gonna do that. Keep an eye on `em.

**Justin:**

Which ones? Wash what, exactly?

**Sydnee:**

Watch the—

**Justin:**

Everything forever? Yes.

**Sydnee:**

... watch the leeches. No. Watch them.

**Justin:**

Watch them.

**Sydnee:**

Keep an eye on `em. Don't let `em go squirming around up there. You don't want them to get lost.



**Justin:**

[To the leeches] Hey, get out of there, boys!

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. [laughs] Control yourself.

**Justin:**

[As Dave from *Alvin and the Chipmunks*] "Alvin!"

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

That's what the original *Alvin and the Chipmunks* was about.

**Sydnee:**

I... I—

**Justin:**

They were leeches—

**Sydnee:**

... don't. Mm-mm.

**Justin:**

... and Dave was trying to keep—

**Sydnee:**

Let's just.. No.

**Justin:**

It's true.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know where you're going. I think you're tired. We'll just move on past...

**Justin:**

No. I'm telling you—

**Sydnee:**

No. We're not- Uh-uh.

**Justin:**

... that that's what's happen.

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

The original *Alvin and the Chipmunks* was about Al- uh, Dave- trying to keep three leeches that he had applied to his buttole... The ancient texts... From the ancient texts.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know where you're going with this.

**Justin:**

I'm just telling you that this is the original *Alvin and the Chipmunks* story.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It was about three leeches.

**Sydnee:**

I love that *Alvin and the Chipmunks* movie where they race around the world in the hot air balloons against The Chipettes and you are ruining it for me right now.

**Justin:**

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. You're right. [singing as leeches] "Watch out, 'cause here we come. We can't stop sucking."

**Sydnee:**

No! Don't! I'm gonna go listen to "We're the Girls of Rock and Roll" after this.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

To cleanse my palate. Pliny, our old pal—

**Justin:**

[sarcastic] My boy.

**Sydnee:**

Our old pal, Pliny the Elder.

**Justin:**

What's he got?

**Sydnee:**

Our fan favorite, Pliny the Elder. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Yeah. Why not?

**Sydnee:**

He gets lots of fan mail. Probably.

**Justin:**

He's a fan favorite.

**Sydnee:**

He had lots of... lots of recommendations. Use an onion as a suppository.

**Justin:**

No. Thank you, Pliny. You're... you're excused.

**Sydnee:**

Uh—

**Justin:**

Thanks. We'll get you next episode, my man.

**Sydnee:**

Onions were thought to, uh, reduce swelling and inflammation.

Eat garlic with wine. But then, vomit it back up afterwards.

**Justin:**

[To Pliny] You dunce!

**Sydnee:**

I.. Don't do that part. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Uh—

**Justin:**

The other stuff is, I'm sure, great, but—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Drink some wine, but don't do that part.

Use a fresh fruit of rosemary and rub it on your butt. Specifically on your anus. And then he also recommended a cream that was made out of pig's lard and the rust from chariot wheels.

**Justin:**

I mean, he did have a flare for the dramatic. Like, you have to give him that.

**Sydnee:**

This is Pliny's classic. An ointment made of... what?!

**Justin:**

He's the only... He's the only person we regularly refer to who gives his cures in a fashion that sounds like *World of Warcraft* quests.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Where you have to obtain... "Go kill ten rats and bring me back their tails and I'll cure your acne."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] In the Middle Ages—

**Justin:**

[quietly groans uncomfortably]

**Sydnee:** When we always know things got really gross, especially in Europe, a popular treatment for hemorrhoids had to do with cauterization.

So the idea that you could treat- I mean, a lot of things, a lot of wounds, were treated with cauterization. So taking something really, like a piece of metal that's really hot, and putting it on it.

There you go.

**Justin:**

"How was your Tuesday? Pretty bad, huh?"

**Sydnee:**

They also recommended that you could... Again, onions were still popular, especially in oil. That's like—

**Justin:**

I'm assuming that maybe onions back then as, if we were using them as suppositories, maybe this was pre-GMO. I'm assuming—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... where maybe we had some smaller onions.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Because when you say onions as suppositories, it sounds like the plot of a *Ren & Stimpy* cartoon.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It makes no sense.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] They're like, scallions...

**Justin:**

You know neither of those things are shaped the way that would lend itself to the scenario you've described.

**Sydnee:**

Maybe like scallions?

**Justin:**

Perhaps scallions, sweetheart. [laughing] Perhaps scallions.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Or yeah. Maybe they confused this with onions, but they were scallions.

**Sydnee:**

Those aren't green onions. They're onions. They are a type of onion.

**Justin:**

Even scallions would be, if you'll pardon the expression, a stretch.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Onions... onions have some properties that make them somewhat anti-inflammatory. That does not mean I'm advocating putting them on your butt. I'm just saying that is where that came from.

Less pleasant, I think though, than onions and oil was cutting them with a sharp knife. Or like I said, this cauterization process.

Now, let's talk a little bit about that. This was also when, the Middle Ages is also when, you recognize that your hemorrhoids may be the result of not paying enough... paying enough respects to Saint Fiacre.

**Justin:**

Mm.

**Sydnee:**

Who was a 7th-century Irish monk and the patron saint of hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

Hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Uh—

**Justin:**

[sarcastic] That's a... That's a noble distinction. [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. If you didn't pray to him, maybe you would get hemorrhoids. And then, as a result of that, you had to go to the monks and ask them to treat you in the way they would treat you.

And there are some amazing illustrations of this out there.

**Justin:**

[laughing]

**Sydnee:**

Please... Like tapestries you would not believe—

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

... of monks with guys bent over and like lifting up their robes with their butts exposed and then taking hot pokers and just directly inserting them—

**Justin:**

No, thanks.

**Sydnee:**

... into their anuses.

**Justin:**

No, I'm good.

**Sydnee:**

To cauterize the hemorrhoids.

And that is... That is how... That was the accepted treatment. Just take a red-hot poker [clicking sound] right up there. Or... or... if you didn't wanna do that—

**Justin:**

And I don't.



**Sydnee:**

... [laughs] you could also go- This patron saint of hemorrhoids had a special rock, a special place, that you could go to and sit on his rock and pray.

**Justin:**

That... Sitting on a rock. Okay. So their advice was sitting on a rock?

**Sydnee:**

Which is probably the antithesis of what you should do. Like that's bad advice. Sitting for a long time actually makes them worse.

That is also why for a while they used to be known as Saint Fiacre's Figs. [laughing] Which is a great name for hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

On a side note, he's also the patron saint of people who have sexually transmitted infections, fistulas, taxi cab drivers, box makers, florists, hosiers, pewterers, tile-makers and people suffering from infertility.

That's like a wide...

**Justin:**

Quite the rogue's gallery you've got there.

**Sydnee:**

Like a Renaissance man there.

**Justin:**

Yeah. He good for pretty much whatev- a little bit of everything, huh?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. [laughs] Taxi cab drivers or hemorrhoids or a florist.

**Justin:**

Anybody else, uh, any other famous hemorrhoid sufferers you'd like to shame on our show?

**Sydnee:**

We're gonna get to that, Justin. But first, why don't you follow me to the billing department?

**Justin:**

Let's go.

[Ad break, theme music plays]

[Ad break ends]

**Justin:**

So, who else had hemorrhoids, Syd?

**Sydnee:**

Well, Justin, Napoleon had hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

I would have guessed that. That was my next guess.

**Sydnee:**

Why would you guess Napoleon had hemorrhoids?

**Justin:**

Just... he seemed angry.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Other than odds are, most people had hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Statistically speaking.

**Sydnee:**

Statistically, most people had hemorrhoids.

So, Napoleon, not only did he famously suffer from hemorrhoids, on the day of the decisive battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was in a lot of pain.

**Justin:**

[singing in the style of ABBA] Waterloo!

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] So—

**Justin:**

[Singing nonsense to the tune of “Waterloo” by ABBA]

**Sydnee:** ... as mentioned in the famous song. So—

**Justin:**

You remember how... You remember how one verse of the ABBA song “Waterloo” is about hemorrhoids? Well, now you know why.

**Sydnee:**

There you go. [laughs] So, he... Actually, it had some thrombosed or like, kinda clotted off hemorrhoids. Those can get exquisitely painful. So hemorrhoids are uncomfortable all the time, but if, they actually become—

**Justin:**

Exquisitely painful?

**Sydnee:**

Yes.

**Justin:**

Who are... [laughs] Who says, “exquisitely painful?” Are you a Stephen King villain?

**Sydnee:**

No. We say that all the time.

**Justin:**

[As Stephen King villain] “Your pain is exquisite.” Are you... Like are you H.R. Giger?

**Sydnee:**

No! That's like a... That's a thing! That's a—

**Justin:**

[Now as H.R. Giger] "Ya. It's a delicious pain."

**Sydnee:**

That's a... That's like a common turn of phrase.

**Justin:**

[As H.R. Giger] "Oh, your discomfort is exquisite."

**Sydnee:**

No! We say that all the time. "It's exquisitely painful."

**Justin:**

[laughs] [As H.R. Giger] "Exquisite pain." [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

I will not take this. I know...

**Justin:**

[continues laughing]

**Sydnee:**

I know how to talk about pain better than you.

**Justin:**

[laughing] Okay. That's fine.

**Sydnee:**

Anyway, his butt hurt real bad, Justin. [laughs]

**Justin:**

How... What... How would you describe the pain? [H.R. Giger voice again]  
"Would you say exquisite?"

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Like Gary Oldman from Dracula? "Exquisite pain."

**Sydnee:**

I would say you're a jerky jerk butt face is what I would say.

**Justin:**

Fair enough. Go on.

**Sydnee:**

So, Napoleon was in a lot of pain because of his thrombosed hemorrhoids. So much in fact that he couldn't actually sit on his horse and survey the battlefield.

Which may have made maybe a big difference in the outcome of said battle. I don't know. Maybe.

**Justin:**

Who knows?

**Sydnee:**

A lot of people like to talk about it. That perhaps it did. Perhaps hemorrhoids changed the course of human history. I'm sure they have at some point or other.

**Justin:**

One would expect, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

During the 19th century, hemorrhoids were often treated by a process called "anal stretching."

Now, you probably don't need to have too, too wild of an imagination to figure out what that—

**Justin:**

Nah. Yeah. I got it. I used my context clues.

**Sydnee:**

Now, I had this question. It took me a while to figure this out. If you're gonna do anal stretching, how are you gonna do it?

**Justin:**

Very carefully.

**Sydnee:**

Well- [laughs] That was too easy. What... I mean, what are you gonna use?

**Justin:**

Uh, I—

**Sydnee:**

I mean, these are, like surgeons were doing this. This was a surgical procedure.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Well, so you can use a dilator. Like things used, made specifically, to fit inside the anus and stretch it wider and wider.

**Justin:**

[exhales]

**Sydnee:**

You can use like a pneumatic kinda balloon device that you like put in there and inflate.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Or four to six fingers.

**Justin:**

Oh, the digital approach.

**Sydnee:**

Digital approach, where you gently massage and stretch until everything is stretched out.

**Justin:**

[pained] Mm. Mm. Mm.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm . Four to... What... I think four to six is an interesting number of fingers to recommend.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Because on one hand, a human has five, generally speaking.

**Justin:**

Uh, you're saying that... that the ultimate in hemorrhoid treatment would come from Count Rugen.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It's really the only—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] That's the only way to get proper anal stretching.

**Justin:**

[As Inigo Montoya] "Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

[As Inigo Montoya] "I have severe discomfort down there and I want to die."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] [As Inigo Montoya] "You are the only man who can help me."

This was also known as "the Lord's operation" or "Lord's anal stretch."

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Now, this is actually named—

**Justin:**

"The Lord's anal stretch" is also the worst workout tape—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... ever available. Track it down on VHS.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] This is actually named for a Dr. Peter Lord, not the Lord.

**Justin:**

Well, you couldn't have told me that 30 seconds ago, Syd—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... before my hilarious joke? Sheesh.



**Sydnee:**

Well, I figured people... Anyway. The thing about it is that it can cause incontinence of stool afterwards or flatus.

**Justin:**

Go on.

**Sydnee:**

That's a doctor word—

**Justin:**

Sorry, "flatus?"

**Sydnee:**

... doctor word for farts.

**Justin:**

Yeah. [laughing] The best joke all podcast.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] So it may have just made like farts come out all the time.

**Justin:**

[snorts] You gotta stop saying it.

**Sydnee:**

So it actually could be somewhat effective and it was even more so effective for fistulas, but it has kind of fallen out of favor.

This is not- This was... There may still be places doing this actually. I mean, this was used definitely in the '80s. It's just, it's been replaced by better procedures now.

But anal stretching is not like completely out of... It's not a crazy thing to do, let me say that.

**Justin:**

It is. But go on.

**Sydnee:**

There might be better ways to do it, but it actually would be effective. So there you go.

In the US, we started, in 1871, first trying out carbolic acid. So, this was the beginning—

**Justin:**

[sarcastic] Oh, fun.

**Sydnee:**

... of what we would think of as like a kinda sclerotherapy. Like inject something corrosive into the hemorrhoid to try to like kill it, so to speak.

Make it die.

**Justin:**

Got it.

**Sydnee:**

And then it would shrivel up and go away.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

And that, not necessarily with carbolic acid, but that is something that is still in use today, the idea of sclerotherapy.

In 1882, there was a Dr. Whitehead who came up with a different surgery to remove hemorrhoids. Because in the extreme cases, the thought was, "We'll just take 'em out of there."

I only mention this because the surgery he came up with was very radical and it removed so much tissue that it actually had a lot of complications afterwards, including rectal eversion.

Meaning like, everything inside kinda poked out.

**Justin:**

[pained] Mm...

**Sydnee:**

And from that, you would get lots of bleeding and secretion.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

And that condition came to be known as "Whitehead's anus."

**Justin:**

[sarcastic] What a proud moment.

**Sydnee:**

Can you imagine if that... If you're a doctor and you finally get something named after you?

**Justin:**

That's the thing.

**Sydnee:**

And that's what it is?

**Justin:**

That's just—

**Sydnee:**

Is a bloody, secreting, everted anus?

**Justin:**

That's just inspiration to work all the harder, you know? To try to come up with something else—

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

... to have named after you. You're gonna really hit it twice as hard after that.

**Sydnee:**

Either that or just take up something else. Like, I'm gonna go into, I don't know, ship making or something after this.

**Justin:**

Anything.

**Sydnee:**

In 1888, Frederick Salmon the founder of St. Mark's Hospital, he came up with some better procedures for... to combine like excising and ligating. Like cutting them out or tying them off and that kinda thing.

And from there, surgeries to remove them or to tie them off or basically to rid yourself of hemorrhoids, not just manage them but rid yourself of them, got much better after that point. We've been perfecting those ever since.

Some kind of random things that you might find out there- or at least that I ran into- is a technique that is still recommended by some people.

Not necessarily doctors, but some people, for hemorrhoids is Ashwini mudra, which is a kind of like yoga.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

A kind of anal yoga, where you basically just like squeeze your butt muscles.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. Got it.

**Sydnee:**

Like squeeze your anal muscles to kinda exercise that area.

**Justin:**

Perfect.

**Sydnee:**

They're... They're like Kegels. Are you familiar with Kegels?

**Justin:**

Sure. Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

You know what they are?

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

So, do you wanna describe them then?

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Since you're the expert there, buddy?

**Justin:**

It's—

**Sydnee:**

I was gonna give you a pass, but you say you know. Go for it.

**Justin:**

Yeah. It's when you squeeze your vaginal muscles. Like as though you're trying to stop yourself from peeing.

And you do that over and over again until it's strong, like bull.

**Sydnee:**

How do you know what Kegels are?

**Justin:**

Because I'm a man of the world.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

This is just a character I play on the podcast, Sydnee. I'm actually well-educated.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. Well, that was a pretty good description. Well, these are kinda like Kegels except for your butt.

**Justin:**

I don't know why you do them at all, in a million years, I couldn't guess why. But I do know what they are.

**Sydnee:**

Why you do Kegels?

**Justin:**

Not in a million years.

**Sydnee:**

To strengthen your pelvic floor if you're having urinary incontinence. Especially a lot of women after childbirth could have like a weakened pelvic... the muscles on the bottom of their pelvis.

**Justin:**

Like a weakened pelvic—

**Sydnee:**

It strengthens them.

**Justin:**

... what?

**Sydnee:**

Floor.

**Justin:**

Weakened.

**Sydnee:**

Weakened.

**Justin:**

Got it. Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Not, not on the weekends. [laughs]

**Justin:**

I got it.

**Sydnee:**

As opposed to weekly pelvic floor, no.

**Justin:**

That is very confusing for me. Go on.

**Sydnee:**

Weakened. And there's like... I found an interactive diagram online, by the way if you're curious. How would you exercise your butt muscles? Well, imagine that you're trying to hold a fart in. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Got it.

**Sydnee:**

That's... that's what you do.

**Justin:**

I always am.

**Sydnee:**

Do that. Hold it for like, you know, five, ten seconds and then let go and do that occasionally. I don't know, several times a day.

Anyway, there's an interactive diagram online, which just shows a butt squeezing over and over and over again. [laughs]

**Justin:**

I can't imagine why it would be interactive, but fine.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Uh, some—

**Justin:**

What input do you need from me here?

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Some famous... Some other famous—

**Justin:**

“Yes, do it. Squeeze that butt. That- You don't need my permission. This doesn't need to be interactive. It's a one-way exchange.”

**Sydnee:**

I don't think... I don't think there's anything wrong with a little healthy exercise. So if you, even if you don't have hemorrhoids, maybe you wanna exercise your butt muscles. Go for it.

Some... There's some famous hemorrhoid sufferers we didn't mention. George Brett was a baseball player who had to leave a 1980 World Series game because his hemorrhoids hurt so bad.

**Justin:**

Oof.

**Sydnee:**

He famously, after he got surgery and got everything fixed and went back to playing said, "I am leaving those problems behind me."



**Justin:**

[laughs] That's pretty good.

**Sydnee:**

[Like Fozzy Bear] Waka. Waka. Glenn Beck also had hemorrhoids.

**Justin:**

Good.

**Sydnee:**

Did you know that?

**Justin:**

Um, yes, I did.

**Sydnee:**

I guess he made like a YouTube video about it?

**Justin:**

I don't know about that. But I used to listen to him back when he was fun.

**Sydnee:**

[incredulous] You used to listen to Glenn Beck?

**Justin:**

You don't understand. There was a period, back in the day, I'm talking like—

**Sydnee:**

I can't—

**Justin:**

... 15 years ago. When it wa- When he was fun.

**Sydnee:**

I can't with you.

**Justin:**

He got- It got wack.

**Sydnee:**

I just can't.

**Justin:**

I'm saying that you- He used to be fun.

**Sydnee:**

I—

**Justin:**

Someone please back me up here. Glenn Beck used to be fun. He used to be basically apolitical.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. There is, supposedly, there is [laughs] somewhere, allegedly, there is a YouTube video of Glenn Beck talking about his hemorrhoid surgery. If you like that kind of thing, I suppose.

I will never watch it. Because you know—

**Justin:**

Everybody's gotta have a fetish.

**Sydnee:**

... inclusion of Glenn Beck.

**Justin:**

So what do I actually do?

**Sydnee:**

What do you actually do for hemorrhoids?

So, if you do have hemorrhoids and they're bothering you, of course, as I always say, you might wanna talk to a doctor about it, especially if you've got a family doctor.

Important for you is to stay regular.

**Justin:**

Okay. I'll do that.

**Sydnee:**

You want to have regular soft bowel movements. And I don't mean like runny diarrhea.

But you also don't wanna be straining or constipated. Regular soft bowel movements so that means plenty of fiber, lots of water.

Exercise. All the things that help keep you regular.

Don't sit or stand for long periods of time. Those irritate hemorrhoids.

If you already know you have hemorrhoids and you spend all day sitting in a chair or all day standing on your feet, unfortunately, those are both conditions that can make them worse.

Sits baths or just baths where you sit in warm water—

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... can actually be very soothing, especially to inflamed hemorrhoids. So doing that once, even twice a day can be really helpful.

Obviously, there are all kinds of over-the-counter creams. A lot of them are like steroid-based creams and those can be helpful as well.

There are prescription medicines. So, if you're... If these methods are not working for you or if you're having, certainly, if you're having bleeding and that kinda thing, go talk to a doctor.

There are things we can prescribe that can help as well.

And worst-case scenario, there are still ways to band them, like rubber band them, tie them off.

**Justin:**

No, thank you.

**Sydnee:**

There are still ways to do sclerotherapy where we kinda shoot stuff in `em, and let `em die.

There are laser therapies. There are surgeries where they remove hemorrhoids.

So there are ways to treat hemorrhoids. If you need help, go talk to a doctor.

On a side note, I didn't talk about witch hazel, which is an herbal medicine that has been used for a super long time and is still around.

And you'll notice in a lot of Tucks pads, that's what's in there. Witch hazel.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I've... There's both kinds, I've noticed that.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. There's like Tucks cooling pads and there's—

**Justin:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... Tucks witch hazel. But anyway. Witch hazel is sold, especially topically, to use for hemorrhoids. And it does have some anti-inflammatory properties that make it useful.

So, you know, you can use some witch hazel on your hemorrhoids.

What I would always recommend though is that if... There are lots of other things out there that they will tell you to take orally for hemorrhoids, like herbal supplements, orally.

I would not take any of those things without talking to a doctor first. Because there are a lot of things that can make your blood thinner and could be dangerous depending on your medical condition.

So I think witch hazel, topically, that's fine. But I would be really careful before taking anything orally.

And in general, just go talk to your doctor.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

This is a podcast.

**Justin:**

This is a podcast. We can't hear you.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Thanks, thank you all so much for listening. Thanks to The Taxpayers for letting us use their song, "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program.

And I guess the midtro, too. I know that's not a thing. But if you go to [taxpayers.bandcamp.com](http://taxpayers.bandcamp.com), you can find this song and so many others available for purchase.

Thanks to the [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) network for having us as part of their extended podcasting family.

I, by the way, if you're bored this week, I'm in a video game with my brothers doing commentary on a golf game called *100ft Robot Golf*.

It's on PS4 and you can get it this Tuesday if you're interested in golf or hearing me talk about one third of a golf match. Then you can get it. It's called *100ft Robot Golf*. Robots play golf in it.

**Sydnee:**

There you go.

**Justin:**

There you go. And, I think that's gonna do it for us, Syd.

**Sydnee:**

Can we... Can we give a quick shout out to the kids at Carlyle Middle School?

**Justin:**

Yes, absolutely.

**Sydnee:**

We met your teacher, Leslie.

**Justin:**

Yes.

**Sydnee:**

But I don't- You probably don't call her by her first name.

**Justin:**

Yup.

**Sydnee:**

That's probably not appropriate. But you know who I'm talking about because she assigns you this show for extra credit, which is cool.

**Justin:**

That's very cool. That's a cool teacher.

**Sydnee:**

So, thank you, kids, for listening. Stay in school and love science like I do. I don't know.

**Justin:**

While we're saying thanks to folks, I wanna say a quick thank you to Candice for the really cool chemical salt shakers.

Thanks to Michael from... Michael has a company called Dellamorte & Co. They make a whole lot of different like magnets and different gifts like that.

He sent us two plague doctor ornaments and there's a human heart bottle opener and all kinds of—

**Sydnee:**

They are so cool.

**Justin:**

... really, really, really cool stuff. It's Dellamorte & Co.

And it's D-E-L-L-A-M-O-R-T-E, I believe I am spelling that correctly. But if you look for Dellamorte & Co. on Etsy, you're gonna find it there. And they make really cool stuff.

Thank you to Katie for sending us a delightful book.

John sent us some framed stamps from Prince Albert's—

**Sydnee:**

The... the cruise.

**Justin:** ... boat trip.

**Sydnee:**

The boat trip where we discovered anaphylaxis.

**Justin:**

Yeah. And, so thank you to everybody for sending that stuff along. You're very sweet.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Thank you all.

**Justin:**

You are... You're all the best. And thank you to, I already tweeted them, but thanks to Julie and Leslie for the gifts they dropped off to us after the Candlenights show.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, thank you all.

**Justin:**

We appreciate you. Okay. That's it. That's the end of the show.

**Sydnee:**

That is it. You've gotta say your name.

**Justin:**

My name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:**

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:**

And as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[Outro, theme music plays]

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