

# Home Management and Other Resources

## Overview

There's more to having an ostomy than changing pouches. You may have to make a few other adjustments. Let's go over the different areas of your home management and find out how to accomplish some everyday activities.

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## BEDROOM

### Dressing

- ▶ Modern pouches lie pretty flat against your body, so even though the pouch is very obvious to you, others usually cannot see it under most clothes. Emptying your pouch when it's 1/3 full will keep it from bulging. There are also specially designed support belts and underwear to help secure the pouch; bicycle pants and stretch girdles may help during periods of increased activity. If your pouching system crosses your belt line, the pants can cause pressure, so you may want to try wearing suspenders or a stoma guard.

### Sleeping

- ▶ The pressure of your body on a full pouch may cause leakage and soiling of your bed linens. This problem may be prevented by:
  - Emptying the pouch right before you go to bed.
  - Not drinking a few hours before bedtime.
  - Using a larger pouch at night if you have a large amount of output.
  - Attaching your urostomy pouch to a nighttime drainage bag.

### Intimacy

- ▶ You can have sex when you feel ready, your wound site has healed and your surgeon/nurse has given you permission to resume all activities. Talk to your partner about any concerns you have about the changes in your body and intimacy. You can help each other adjust. Some steps that may help with your comfort are to empty the pouch, use an opaque pouch cover, or use lingerie to conceal the pouch. Be aware that there will not be any odor. New positions may help to decrease any extra pressure on the pouch. Some men may have difficulty having an erection after the operation. If you have any questions, feel free to talk to your doctor or nurse. Pregnancy is possible following an ostomy.

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## BATHROOM

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### Your medicine

- ▶ Some changes may need to be made to your regular medications. Let your primary care doctor and pharmacist know that you have an ostomy.

### Bathing

- ▶ You may shower with or without the pouch on. Many people find it easiest to change the pouch system during shower time. Remove the entire pouch and barrier prior to the bath or shower. When you shower without the pouch, remember that soap and water do not hurt the stoma. Clean and inspect the skin, then apply the new barrier and pouch. Since a urostomy drains often, it may work best to remove the pouch at the end of the bath or shower, which keeps urine from ending up in the tub water or on the floor of the shower. Avoid lotions and oils on the peristomal skin.

### Toilet

- ▶ A drainable pouch should be emptied when it is 1/3 to 1/2 full.
- ▶ If you have a disposable pouch, you may choose to have a supply of disposable waste bags in your bathroom. The soiled pouch will need to be placed in a sealed bag and then thrown in the trash.

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## KITCHEN/DIET

Following a urostomy, there are usually no restrictions on what you can eat or drink. Your ostomy pouch is odor proof, so the only time you will notice an odor is when you empty your pouch.

- ▶ Foods that increase odor
  - Asparagus, onions, garlic
- ▶ Drinks that decrease odor
  - Cranberry juice, noncaffeinated drinks
  - Drinking 8 to 10 glasses of fluid a day can help decrease urine odor.

## OUTDOORS

### Returning to work and school

- ▶ You should be able to return to work or school as soon as you heal, usually 6 to 12 weeks after the operation. Let your surgeon know the type of work that you do, especially if it involves heavy lifting.
- ▶ Usually, students will not return to gym class or play strenuous sports until they have been cleared by their physician.
- ▶ You will need to have extra supplies and possibly a change of clothes.
- ▶ Be prepared for what you will tell the people you meet about your operation. Tell them as much as you want them to know. You can also tell them very little and still say simply that you had abdominal surgery.



### Traveling

- ▶ You may travel as normal with a little extra planning:
  - You should not drive a car until you are cleared by a physician.
  - Be sure you take extra supplies, since they may not be available while traveling. Take the phone number of where you can get your products just in case you have to order more in an emergency.
  - For airline travel, pack some supplies in your carry-on luggage. Precut the pouches at home because scissors won't be allowed in a carry-on. You should also have a note from your doctor identifying that you need the pouching system and also that you would need a private area in case airport security does an extended search. If you use cream or powder, they will need to be in a sealed plastic bag for carry-on luggage.
  - For road trips, check the location of your seat belt to avoid pressure on the pouch. If the seat belt rests on the pouch, put the seat belt below or above the pouch. Do not keep your pouches in areas of extreme heat, such as the back rear window or trunk of your car. If you use disposable pouches, remember that you may need zip-top bags to dispose of the pouches.

## Exercise and activity

- ▶ Heavy lifting may cause a hernia near the stoma site. Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lbs. (a gallon of milk) for the first 2 to 6 weeks after your operation. Lifting limitations may last longer; consult your surgeon.
- ▶ You can return to all exercise once you have been cleared by your physician. Heat and sweat may decrease a pouch's barrier adhesive, so you may need to check your pouch more often. Special belts or binders are available to keep your pouch in place. Talk to your doctor about contact sports and a stoma guard for contact activities.
- ▶ Once your wound is fully healed and you've been cleared by your surgeon, you may swim and get in hot tubs with your ostomy. You will need to make sure that the pouch is supported by wearing a swimsuit with a high waistline and one with extra support. Check the skin barrier to make sure you have a good seal. Support belts especially made for added security during swimming are available. Some people use waterproof tape around the edges of the barrier.

## Family discussion

- ▶ Your family and dear friends will want to understand more about your operation and care. Initially, you may feel tired and need help with daily routines. Soon, changing and emptying your pouch will be managed quickly and require little extra attention. Some things you might want to talk about include: who should know about the ostomy, how each person feels about the operation, and what to do if someone notices a pouch leak (for example, signal system).



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# Additional Ostomy Resources

## Resources

### American College of Surgeons Ostomy Home Skills Program and E-Learning Course

[facs.org/adultostomy](http://facs.org/adultostomy) | 1-800-621-4111

### Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN®)

[wocn.org](http://wocn.org) | 1-888-224-9626

### United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA)

[ostomy.org](http://ostomy.org) | 1-800-826-0826

### American Urological Association (AUA)

[auanet.org](http://auanet.org)

### American Pediatric Surgical Association (APSA)

[eapsa.org](http://eapsa.org)

### American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association (APSNA)

[apsna.org](http://apsna.org)

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