

Managing Your Colostomy

Patient Education Series



Your Colostomy

This booklet can help you understand and manage your colostomy. It is important to remember that you are not alone. Every year thousands of people have colostomy surgery. For some, it is a lifesaving event. It may be performed to repair an injury, remove a tumour or eliminate disease. Whatever the medical reason for your surgery, it's natural to have questions and concerns.

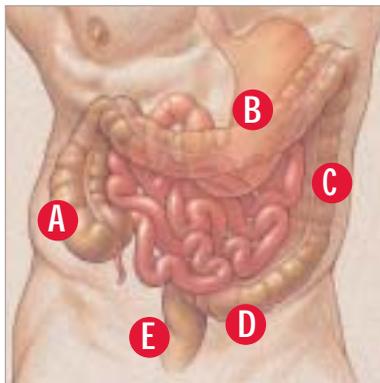
The purpose of this booklet is to answer some of your questions and to ease some of your concerns about living with a colostomy.

This booklet is provided to you by your health care team and Hollister. It supplements information given to you by your Doctor and your Stomal Therapy Nurse (STN) – a nurse who specialises in ostomy care.

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About Your Colostomy



- A: Ascending colon.
- B: Transverse colon.
- C: Descending colon.
- D: Sigmoid colon.
- E: Rectum.

Before your surgery

Determining where the stoma will be placed on your abdomen is a very important part of the preparations for your surgery. A colostomy stoma can be located anywhere on your abdomen.

Before your surgery, your STN will determine the best location for your stoma. Ideally, the stoma should be placed on a smooth skin surface. It should be located where you can see the stoma easily and take care of it yourself.

The gastrointestinal (GI) system

When you chew your food and swallow it, the food goes down your oesophagus into your stomach. Stomach acids and chemicals called **enzymes** break down the food until it becomes a liquid mixture. From your stomach, the liquid food mixture goes into your small intestine.

The **small intestine** – which is about six metres long – is where most digestion takes place. Vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates are all absorbed into your body through your small intestine. Any food that is not absorbed in the small intestine goes into the large intestine as liquid waste or **stool**.

Your **large intestine** is also called the **colon**. It is generally one metre long. The colon has two main purposes:

1. to absorb water from your stool
2. to store your stool until you have a bowel movement

The colon is divided into four parts: the ascending colon, the transverse colon, the descending colon, and the sigmoid colon. As the stool moves through your colon, more and more water is absorbed until the stool becomes completely formed. When you have a bowel movement, stool and gas go from your colon into your **rectum**, and then out of your body through your **anus**. A muscle in your anus, called the anal **sphincter**, allows you to control when to have a bowel movement.

What is a colostomy?

A **colostomy** is a surgically created opening into the colon through the abdomen. Its purpose is to allow the stool to bypass a diseased or damaged part of the colon. A colostomy may be made at almost any point along the length of the colon. It may be temporary or permanent, depending on the medical reason for the surgery.



A colostomy is a surgically created opening into the colon through the abdomen.

When you have a colostomy, stool is no longer eliminated through the anus. Instead, it is eliminated through the colostomy. To construct a colostomy, your surgeon brings part of the colon through the abdominal wall. This new opening on the abdomen is called a **stoma**.

Because a colostomy does not have a sphincter muscle, you have no voluntary control over bowel movements. Instead, you will wear a disposable pouch to collect the stool.

Each stoma is unique. Chances are, your stoma will look different from someone else's. The stoma should not be painful. It is always red and moist – somewhat like the inside of your lip. The stoma may also bleed easily, especially if it is hit or rubbed. This type of minor, temporary bleeding is normal. (If the bleeding continues, or if the discharge (stool) is bloody, you should contact your doctor or your STN.)

Your stoma will probably be swollen after surgery. It may take several weeks for the stoma to shrink to its permanent size.

If you have a temporary stoma, it may be a loop or double barrel. A loop colostomy may have a supporting rod that is normally removed after four to seven days.

The skin around the stoma is called the **peristomal skin**. The skin around your stoma should be well protected and free from irritation. The most important thing you can do to keep your skin healthy is to use ostomy products that fit well.



The stoma

- Not painful.
- Always red and moist.
- May bleed easily.

Colostomy Pouching Systems



Left to right:
One-Piece Drainable Pouch,
One-Piece Closed Pouch,
Two-Piece Closed Pouch
and Skin Barrier.

You can choose the kind of Hollister colostomy **pouch** you want to use. Your pouch may be part of a one-piece or two-piece pouching system, and many have clear and beige options. You can also select pouches that have a soft cover, such as the Hollister ComfortWear panel, to increase your comfort.

You might choose a pouch with a filter if your drainage is mostly solid. The filter lets the gas out, but not the odour. It also prevents gas from building up, so the pouch does not inflate like a balloon.

Hollister provides odour barrier pouches to increase your confidence when wearing a pouch.

Drainable pouch

Drainable pouches are best if you have fluid output. They have a clamp or an integral closure, so emptying the pouch is quick and easy.

Closed pouch

If you use a closed pouch, you can simply remove it and throw it away. This type works best if your output is formed. Your pouch may need to be emptied one to three times a day. Closed pouches don't have clamps and must be removed to be emptied. All Hollister closed pouches have a filter.

Managing Your Colostomy

Lifestyle Tips

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Add foods to your diet gradually, to see how those foods agree with your system.
- Drink plenty of water, juice or other fluids each day.

Skin care

It is very important for the skin around the stoma to remain healthy and free of irritation. The peristomal skin should look just like the skin elsewhere on your abdomen. To prevent skin irritation or other skin problems, you should have a pouch that fits properly.

Each time you remove your pouch, look carefully at your peristomal skin. If you notice any swelling, redness or rash, you could have irritated skin. Sometimes – but not always – irritated skin is painful. If the problem persists or gets worse, be sure to contact your STN.

Bathing or showering

With a colostomy, you can shower or bathe just as you did before. Soap and water will not flow into your stoma or hurt it in any way. You may shower or bathe with your pouch on or off – the choice is yours. Soap residue can sometimes interfere with how well the skin barrier or adhesive sticks to your skin, so choose a soap or cleanser that is residue-free.

Diet

Immediately after surgery, you may be on a restricted diet. After your recovery from surgery, you should be able to go back to your usual diet unless you are otherwise instructed.

Remember, the actual digestion of food takes place almost entirely in the small intestine, not in the colon. There are some foods that can cause odour or gas in your system. If that is a concern for you, you may want to eat those foods in moderation.

Odour

Odour is a major concern for people who have ostomy surgery. Today's colostomy pouches are made with odour-barrier film, so odour from the stool is contained inside the pouch. You should notice it only when you are emptying or changing your pouch. If you notice odour at any other time, check the pouch seal for leakage.

Empty your pouch when it is necessary and convenient; for many people, that means one to three times a day. Emptying your pouch regularly can help reduce the risk of leakage. It can also help to avoid a bulge from a pouch that is too full. Your diet can affect the odour of the stool. Some foods and nutritional supplements affect the odour of stool.

Foods that may increase odour:

- asparagus
- broccoli
- brussel sprouts
- cabbage
- cauliflower
- eggs
- fish
- garlic
- onions
- some spices

Gas

As your bowel begins to function after surgery, you will notice gas in your pouch. The amount of gas varies. If you experienced excessive gas before your surgery, you will likely have similar problems after your surgery.

Gas can be caused by the foods you eat. It can also be the result of swallowing air. Drinking carbonated beverages, smoking, chewing gum, and chewing with your mouth open can all increase the amount of air you swallow.

If you are concerned about gas, you can use a pouch with a filter. The filter lets the gas out of the pouch, but not the odour. It also prevents gas from building up, so the pouch does not inflate like a balloon. Filters work best with a more formed discharge.

Foods and beverages that may increase gas:

- beans
- beer
- beverages
- broccoli
- brussel sprouts
- cabbage
- carbonated beverages
- eggs
- fish
- garlic
- onions
- some spices

Lifestyle Tips

- Diarrhoea can cause dehydration, so you may need to increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- If you normally irrigate your colostomy, stop until the diarrhoea ceases. You can later resume your normal irrigation schedule.
- If the diarrhoea persists, call your doctor.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea can occur for a variety of reasons. With a colostomy, you can still get diarrhoea, just as before your surgery. If you have diarrhoea, there are some foods you can eat that may help to thicken your stool. Avoid foods and beverages that cause loose stools.

Foods that may help thicken your stool:

- applesauce
- bananas
- cheese
- creamy peanut butter – not chunky
- noodles – any type
- pretzels
- white rice
- white toast
- yoghurt

Medication

Some medications or nutritional supplements may change the colour, odour, or consistency of your stool. Non-prescription medications, like antacids, can cause constipation or diarrhoea. Antibiotics may make your stool thinner than normal, and may even cause diarrhoea. If you have questions about any medications you are taking, ask your doctor, pharmacist or your STN.

Irrigation

Irrigation can sometimes be an option for a person who has a descending colostomy or a sigmoid colostomy. The purpose of colostomy irrigation is to allow you to control when to have a bowel movement. Irrigation trains the colon to empty at a regular time each day.

Irrigation is somewhat like an enema through the stoma. It is very important to learn the technique of irrigation from a health care professional. If you are interested in irrigation, ask your STN for more information.

Maintaining Your Lifestyle

Lifestyle Tips

- When flying, pack your ostomy products in your carry-on bag.
- Pre-cut your products so you will not need to carry scissors in your carry-on bag.
- Fasten the seat belt above or below your stoma.
- Store your ostomy products in a cool, dry place.
- Plan ahead. Know where to contact a local STN when travelling.

Clothing

After colostomy surgery, many people worry that the pouch will be visible under their clothing. Some people think they won't be able to wear "normal" clothes, or that they will have to wear clothes that are too big for them. You should be able to wear the same type of clothes you wore before your surgery. In fact, today's pouches are so thin and fit so close to the body, chances are no one will know you're wearing a pouch – unless you tell them.

The pouch can be worn inside or outside your underwear, whichever is more comfortable. Women can wear pantyhose or girdles. Choose a patterned swim suit, instead of one with a solid colour.

Returning to work and travelling

As with any surgery, you will need some time to recover. Be sure to check with your doctor before returning to work or starting strenuous activity.

Once you've recovered from the surgery, your colostomy should not limit you. You should be able to return to work or travel just about anywhere. When you travel, take your colostomy supplies with you. Take more than you think you will need. If you need to buy supplies while travelling overseas, you will find that colostomy products are available from select medical or surgical retailers throughout the world.

Lifestyle Tips

- Empty your pouch before swimming.
 - You may add tape to the edges of your skin barrier before swimming.
 - You may need to change your pouch more often if you wear it in a hot tub or sauna.
-
- Empty your pouch before having sexual relations.
 - Sexual activity will not hurt you or your stoma.
 - You may wear a smaller pouch or stoma cap during sex.
 - A beige pouch or pouch cover can help hide the pouch contents.
 - Intimate apparel can hide the pouch and keep it close to your body.

Activity, exercise and sports

A colostomy should not prevent you from exercising or from being physically active. Other than extremely rough contact sports or very heavy lifting, you should be able to enjoy the same type of physical activities you enjoyed before your surgery.

People with colostomies are able to swim, water ski or snow ski, play golf, tennis, volleyball, softball, hike, sail, or jog just as they did before their surgery. Heat and moisture can reduce the wear time of the pouching system.

Sex and personal relationships

Because colostomy surgery is a body-altering procedure, many people worry about sex and intimacy, and about acceptance by their spouse or loved one. For people who are dating, a big concern is how to tell someone about the colostomy.

Supportive personal relationships can be major sources of healing after any type of surgery. The key, of course, is understanding and communication.

Colostomy surgery affects both partners in a relationship, and it's something to which both partners must adjust, each in his or her own way. Let your partner know that sexual activity will not hurt you or your stoma. If you have concerns about your emotional adjustment after surgery, be sure to talk about them with your doctor or STN.

If you are concerned about having children, you will be happy to know that after a satisfactory recovery, it is still possible for a woman who has a stoma to have children. Many men have become fathers after having colostomy surgery. If you have questions about pregnancy, be sure to ask your doctor or your STN.

Routine Care of Your Colostomy

When your doctor says it is appropriate, you can resume your normal activities. You will get used to your Hollister pouch system and develop a schedule that fits your lifestyle. Here are a few guidelines for successful care of your colostomy.

- A closed pouch should be changed when it is one-third to one-half full.
- Replace the flange on a two-piece system every 2nd to 3rd day and change pouches as necessary.
- If you use soap, make sure it doesn't contain oils or lotions that can interfere with adhesives.
- Rinse your skin with water, and dry it completely before you apply the new pouch.
- After you apply your pouch, hold it against your body for 30-60 seconds. The pressure and warmth help activate the adhesive.
- If you wear a two-piece system, try putting your flange on at an angle, making a diamond shape, for a smoother fit.
- You can shower or bathe with your skin barrier and pouch in place, or you can remove them before bathing. Water will not harm or flow into your stoma.
- If your skin becomes red and sore, or your pouch is not staying in place, be sure to see your doctor or STN.

Call your STN if you notice any of the following problems:

- Skin irritation.
- Recurrent leaks of your pouch or skin barrier.
- Excessive bleeding of your stoma.
- Blood in your stool.
- A bulge in the skin around your stoma.
- Persistent diarrhoea.
- Diarrhoea with pain and/or vomiting.

Follow Up Care

Lifestyle Tips

Your doctor and your STN are very important resources.

An annual physical with your doctor is something that should definitely be a part of your routine. It's also a good idea to have an annual checkup with your STN.

Following surgery: discharge information

Your STN can help you keep a record of your surgery and recommend the right products to maintain the health of your colostomy.

Type of ostomy: _____

Date of surgery: _____

Stoma size and shape: _____

Recommended pouching system: _____

Other recommended products: _____

Other suggestions: _____

You can get your ostomy products through the following Ostomy Association:

Ostomy Assoc. Name: _____

Ostomy Assoc. Address: _____

Telephone: _____

STN Contact Details (attach business card, if available)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Australian and New Zealand Ostomy Associations

Australian Capital Territory

ACT & District Stoma Association (02) 6205 1055

New South Wales

Colostomy Association (02) 9565 4315

Ileostomy Association (02) 9568 2799

Northern Territory

Anti Cancer Foundation (08) 8927 6389

Queensland

Gold Coast Ostomy Association (07) 5594 7633

North Queensland Ostomy Association (07) 4775 2303

Queensland Colostomy Association (07) 3848 7178

Queensland Stoma Association (07) 3359 7570

Toowoomba & South West Ostomy Association (07) 4636 9701

Wide Bay Ostomy Association (07) 4150 2074

South Australia

Colostomy Association (08) 8354 2618

Ileostomy Association (08) 8234 2678

Tasmania

Ileostomy & Colostomy Association (03) 6223 2974

Victoria

Bendigo & District Ostomy Association (03) 5441 7520

Colostomy Association (03) 9650 1666

Geelong Ostomy Association (03) 5222 3168

Ileostomy Association (03) 9650 9040

Ostomy Association of Melbourne (03) 9508 1879

Peninsula Ostomy Association (03) 9783 6473

Victorian Children's Ostomy Association (03) 9345 5522

Warrnambool & District Ostomy Association (03) 5563 1446

Western Australia

West Australian Ostomy Association (08) 9272 1833

Federation of New Zealand Ostomy Societies

Frances Butler (President),
11c Acacia Place, Bell Block New Plymouth (06) 755 1456

Mrs Robyn Tourell (Secretary),
FNZOS. P.O. Box 5917, Dunedin (03) 454 5330

Mr John O'Neill (Treasurer),
Kakatahi, RD 15, Wanganui (06) 342 8808

Glossary

Anus	The last section of the digestive tract where faeces are expelled.
Colon	Another term for the large intestine or last portion of the gastrointestinal tract.
Colostomy	An ostomy (surgical opening) created in the colon, part of the large intestine.
Enzymes	Digestive enzymes break down the food we eat so it can be used as a source of nutrition.
Flange	The base plate (skin barrier) of a two-piece system that adheres to the skin.
Large intestine	Another term for the colon or the last part of the gastrointestinal tract.
One-Piece	The skin barrier is attached to the pouch.
Peristomal skin	The skin area around the stoma.
Pouch	The bag that collects the discharge from the stoma.
Rectum	The lower end of the large intestine, leading to the anus.
Skin barrier	Part of the pouching system to protect your skin.
Small intestine	The portion of the gastrointestinal system that first receives food from the stomach. Divided into three sections: duodenum, jejunum and ileum.
Sphincter	A muscle that surrounds and closes an opening. A stoma does not have a sphincter.
STN	Stomal Therapy Nurse
Stoma	Another term for ostomy, a surgically created opening.
Stool	Waste material from the bowel. Also known as faeces or bowel movement.
Two-Piece	The skin barrier is separate from the pouch. Both pieces are needed to create a complex pouching system.



Additional educational materials and video programs are available from:

Hollister Australia

6/345 Ingles Street
Port Melbourne, Victoria
Australia 3207

Hollister New Zealand

33 Vestey Drive
Mount Wellington
Auckland, New Zealand

For more information, call:

FreeCall 1800 335 911 (Australia)

FreeCall 0800 167 866 (New Zealand)

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For further information, see our website
at www.ostomyworld.com

