

Colostomy

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Your before and after guide



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Hearing that you need stoma surgery will most likely be very difficult and will leave you with many questions. However, you are not alone; each year in the UK thousands of people like you go through stoma surgery and are supported, like you will be, by a team of healthcare professionals.

There will be lots of information and guidance available and this may feel overwhelming, so please do not hesitate to ask your nurse any questions you have.

If your operation is planned, you may have the opportunity to decide on a suitable location for your stoma with your nurse. Your nurse will take into account things like your lifestyle and clothing, and by agreeing on a location, siting your stoma means that after recovery you should be able to continue the activities that you enjoy, and be able to wear the clothes that you are used to.

You will have the opportunity to practise applying and removing a pouch before your operation. This will give you an idea of what to expect or what having a stoma will be like, and your nurse will be able to answer any questions you may have.

This booklet will cover all you need to know prior to the operation and early days of recovery. We hope that the following hints and tips will help you.

before your surgery

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after your surgery

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This booklet has been produced in conjunction with the Community Specialist Nurse Team at Respond Healthcare.

Meet Alison,

Stoma Care Nurse Team Leader..



Alison began her nursing career in 1980 working at Stratford on Avon Hospital. In 1987, she completed the first of her three nationally recognised stoma courses and became a Stoma Care Nurse at Warwick, covering both the hospital and community. Counselling patients prior to surgery, following their surgery in hospital and also at home in the community allowed for a smooth transition from hospital to home. In 2005, she completed her degree in Specialist Nursing Practice and since 2007 has been providing care solely in the community.

With almost 40 years nursing experience, Alison is passionate about providing high quality care with a holistic approach.

what is a stoma?

A stoma is a surgical opening that is created to allow faeces or urine to exit the body before it reaches the rectum or bladder. It can be either permanent or temporary.

The stoma will be pinkish red colour, similar to the inside of your mouth, and will be soft and moist.

There are no nerves in a stoma so there are no sensations when touching it. Everyone's stoma is different in size and shape.



what is a Colostomy?

1

A colostomy is a **surgical procedure**

Where the **Large intestine/colon** is cut and brought through the abdomen wall



2

It can be **temporary** or **permanent**

3

It is used to treat many conditions including

colon cancer, crohn's disease, intestinal obstruction and diverticulitis



4



A colostomy is normally on the **left side** of your **abdomen**

5

Stool consistency is **semi-formed**

6



People living with a colostomy generally wear

closed pouches

7

The amount of times you need to change the bag can vary but is normally between



1 & 3 times a day

before your surgery



Before surgery, members of the medical team, which includes your surgeon and your specialist stoma nurse, will help to prepare you and advise you about your operation.

You will discuss with your surgeon the type of stoma which is best for you and whether the stoma is going to be permanent or temporary. The procedure involved will be carefully explained and you will also have the opportunity to voice concerns or ask any questions.

Due to the wealth of information that you will be given, it is quite likely that you will not be able to take it all in at first. Your stoma care nurse will be on hand both before and after surgery to help you through it. Your stoma care nurse will want to know as much as possible about your lifestyle and needs and based on this your nurse and surgeon will recommend the best position for your stoma.

It is perfectly normal to be anxious before surgery and whilst your medical team will be on hand to offer any advice, the following may be of some help to you.

packing for your stay in hospital

To make sure your stay in hospital is as comfortable as possible you might want to think about packing the following:



A supply of night clothes



A comfortable dressing gown and slippers



Plenty of clean underwear, including socks



Comfortable day clothes



A small hand towel



Sanitary products



Razor and shaving products



Comb or hairbrush



Any medication you normally take, and a list of doses of each medicine



Books and magazines (and reading glasses if required)



Toiletries - soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant

after your surgery



waking up with your stoma

Whether you are expecting it or not, waking up for the first time with a stoma may be daunting. You are likely to feel uncomfortable and sore but staff will give you medication to ease the soreness. Your stoma will be swollen initially, this is normal and will reduce in size in a few weeks.

The surgery you have gone through may affect you both physically and emotionally and it may take time to come to terms with the major changes to your body, but this is completely natural.

During the first few days after your surgery you should expect to feel tired and emotional, and you may also find your body image and confidence has been affected. These feelings are normal and are natural responses to dealing with the stress of your illness and surgery.

At no point should you be afraid to open up about how you are feeling to your partner, family or close friends. Acknowledging these feelings will help you emotionally and aid your recovery.

As well as family and friends, please remember that your stoma care nurse is also there to help and support you.

your first pouch

When you wake up from your surgery it is very likely that the pouch you are wearing will be clear. This is so the nurses can monitor your stoma during the first few days of your recovery.

Your stoma may not function for the first few days after your operation, which is perfectly normal. Once your stoma becomes active your nurse will begin teaching you how to change your pouch.

The thought of changing your pouch yourself might be frightening, but the nurses will spend as much time with you as you need until both you and they are confident that you can change your pouch independently.

your stoma care routine

Dealing with managing your stoma on top of recovering from major abdominal surgery will likely leave you feeling frustrated and worried about coping. It is completely natural to feel this way and being open about these feelings is important in helping you to overcome them.

Initially your stoma care routine will be slow, which is to be expected, but with patience and practise you will become quicker and more confident.

Be mindful not to rush yourself. Take your time to understand what works best for you individually and you will soon develop the routine that is right for you.

Your nurse will be able to answer all of your questions so please don't be afraid to ask, no matter how insignificant you think your question is.

You will also get great help and advice from the Colostomy UK. Their information is listed below;



24-hour free helpline
0800 328 4257

Email
info@colostomyuk.org

Website
colostomyuk.org

going home with your stoma

The operation you will have involves major abdominal surgery and as such you should make sure you give yourself enough time to recover. Generally it takes around 8-12 weeks, but every person is different and you should not try and do too much before you are ready.

In your first weeks at home you should focus on resting and getting your strength back gradually. Accept offers of help from family and friends, allow yourself to nap when you need to and listen to your body if you feel tired.

clothing

After your operation your abdomen will likely feel tender so you might be more comfortable initially in loose fitting clothes. Once healed you should be able to wear your regular clothes as normal.

For anyone who is living with a stoma and is concerned about wearing their current clothes, there is a wide range of ostomy-friendly clothing and support garments available on prescription and to buy online.

HiLINE garments are designed to provide abdominal support following surgery, to find out more about HiLINE support call us on 0800 200 300 / 0800 028 6848 (N.Ireland) or visit respond.co.uk

driving

Following your operation it is important that you check with your GP or consultant before you start to drive again. It is also important to check your insurance policy as conditions may vary depending on your insurer.

Do not drive until you have been given the authority to do so. Failure to comply with this advice may invalidate your insurance and could also be harmful to your recovery.

exercise

When you're feeling strong enough, gentle exercise is a really good way of aiding your recovery.

It is really important that you do not attempt to do too much too soon, but a short walk, even just around the house or garden, will be really beneficial to you.

As your strength returns, consider setting yourself a target of doing a little more each time. Please remember that however far you go you will also have to get back, so do not tire yourself out by walking too far!

Walking with a friend is advised as not only does it make the walk more interesting but it is safer, especially should you feel unwell. If you do go out walking alone then be sure to let someone know where you are going and how long you intend to be out. You may want to take a spare pouch or some supplies with you, should you have an accident when out.

For your safety, always take a mobile phone when you leave the house.

lifting

During recovery you should avoid any unnecessary lifting. However, if you do need to lift anything then you should place your feet shoulder width apart with one foot in front of the other, keep your back straight and bend your knees.

nutrition

An important part of the recovery process after major surgery is making sure you eat and drink enough to help your body repair itself.

You might not feel up to eating much initially, but smaller meals and snacks eaten regularly throughout the day will give your body the nutrition it needs to aid your recovery.

Building up your appetite gradually is much kinder to your digestive system in the early stages of recovery. A varied diet that includes each of the different food groups in moderation is the best option.

Keeping hydrated is also a really important part of the recovery process so be sure to drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Please be mindful not to drink too much water before meals as this can curb your appetite.

your recovery

You will probably be daunted by the prospect of recovering from your surgery and managing your stoma at the same time. Please be reassured that feeling this way is completely natural.

The information in this booklet is intended as a guide; your recovery is unique to you and how you feel each day after your surgery. You know your body best and you should always do what is best for you.

If you have any questions before your surgery or during your recovery please do not hesitate to contact your nurse.

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our promise to you

**be consistent - give you choice - be flexible - listen to you
be there for you - give you the freedom to enjoy life**

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Closed on Bank holidays

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London
NW9 5XY

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Fax 0203 051 2412
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Fax 01733 806 515
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Closed Saturday

Manchester

2 Victoria Avenue East
Manchester
M9 6HB

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Fax 0161 820 4510
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PH2 8EP

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