

**OSTOMY SELF-MANAGEMENT:
OSTOMY CARE**

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is an ostomy?

An ostomy is a surgically constructed opening from the bladder or bowel to the exterior of the body. This means that the urine or stool is “re-routed” to exit through the stoma on the outside of the abdomen. The word “stoma” means opening. Although stomas differ in size and shape, they have many characteristics in common. The general characteristics of stomas are described below.

The Stoma...

Is always red...	Red is a healthy color, as the stoma is full of blood vessels, which are very close to the surface of the stoma.
Is always moist...	The stoma is a mucous membrane (just like the inside of the mouth). It has its own natural lubrication.
May bleed...	The large number of blood vessels on the surface of the stoma may fracture and bleed slightly when changing the appliance. This is similar to the bleeding that occurs when you bite the inside of your mouth while eating and is <u>not</u> a cause for concern.
Has no feeling...	The stoma does not contain any nerve endings. Therefore, there is no sensation when you touch it. There is sensation on the skin surrounding a stoma.
May “move”...	Peristalsis is the rhythmic movement that occurs in normal intestines (large and small) to move the intestinal contents along. Even though the stoma has been formed on the abdomen, this movement will continue to occur. You will see the stoma expand and contract, right before your eyes.
May vary in shape...	Not all stomas are round. Many stomas are oval or irregular in shape. It is important that the stoma is measured accurately both horizontally and vertically. The appliance must fit properly so the skin around the stoma is adequately protected.
May “swell”...	Occasionally, a virus or blockage may cause the stoma to swell. It is important to re-measure the stoma when swelling occurs to be sure that the opening in the appliance is adequate.

What is the daily care of my ostomy?

Bag change:

1. Cleanse the stoma with a warm, wet wash cloth.
2. Rinse the bag and reuse or change the bag and reattach to the appliance.

Complete appliance change:

1. Gently remove the appliance.
2. Wash the stoma and surrounding skin with a warm, wet wash cloth using plain water. If soap is used, rinse thoroughly.
3. Dry the area thoroughly.
4. Keep the hair around the stoma shaved.
5. If you notice changes in the skin around the stoma, contact your nurse or physician for instructions.
6. Measure the stoma to check for changes in stoma size. The hole in the appliance should be the same size as the stoma. This protects the surrounding skin from the excoriating effects of urine or stool.
7. Place the appliance around the stoma so the base of the stoma is hugged by the opening of the skin barrier or pouch. Firmly hold the appliance in place for a few seconds so the heat of your body will seal the barrier to the skin surrounding the stoma.
8. Reapply the bag. Check to be sure that it is securely attached.

What supplies will I need for my stoma?

Keep the following supplies together in one area. Check your supplies regularly, and reorder in advance. This will ensure that you will always have all the necessary supplies.

1. Wash cloths or non-sterile 4X4 gauze pads.
2. Mild soap
3. Appliances
4. Skin Prep – only if wafer has tape
5. A measuring guide.
6. Scissors (to cut stoma wafer the exact size of the stoma).

What Do I Need To Report to My Physician?

A normal stoma is pink or red, moist, may bleed at times and does not have sensation. Call your physician if you experience the following:

1. Unusual change in stoma or your stoma turns blue or black.
2. The skin around the stoma appears red, swollen or excoriated.
3. Excessive bleeding (blood in pouch with each emptying of bag) or continuous bleeding at juncture of stoma and skin.
4. Cramps lasting 2-3 hours or nausea/vomiting
5. Severe watery discharge lasting more than 5-6 hours (colostomy only).
6. You have a temperature over 100°F

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