

# Stoma Care Discharge Advice: Colostomy

General Surgery

## Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information and advice about living with your colostomy. If you have any questions or concerns not answered here, please contact your Colorectal Nurse Specialist. Contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.

## The first few months:

Your stoma will take about two months to shrink after the operation. Your flanges can be cut to size after this but, get in touch if you need any help with this. It is a good idea to re-check the size of your stoma if your weight changes.

## How do I get more equipment?

Your Specialist Nurse will set this up for you and show you how to get ongoing supplies.

Your appliances can be obtained on prescription from a specialist delivery company or a chemist, whichever you prefer. Make sure you have a minimum of 30 appliances left when you order and always order early near public holidays. If your colostomy is permanent then you are entitled to free prescriptions. If your colostomy is temporary and you are not exempt from prescription charges, you may need a prepayment certificate. Your Colorectal Nurse will help you with this.

## Stoma Clinics

Following your discharge you will be given an appointment for the stoma clinic - in approximately 6 weeks. Please note if you do experience any problems before your appointment, you can ring the department for advice.

- Stoma review; assessment of stoma and products
- Practical help and advice
- Colostomy irrigation, advice and teaching
- Assessment for support garment
- Discussion of progress and adaptation to life with a stoma
- Psychological and sexual advice
- Support group information or patient networking

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

## How do I look after my colostomy?

- A colostomy appliance is usually changed twice a day; when it is no more than half full.
- Use warm water to clean around your stoma to avoid causing skin irritations.
- You will usually see a little blood on the tissue when you wipe your stoma.
- Wash your hands after dealing with your stoma.
- Always take spare equipment out with you in case you need to change your appliance
- Make sure you have at least one box of appliances left when re-ordering, and always order early around public holidays
- Dispose of your used appliance by wrapping it then putting it directly into a 'wheelie bin'. If you do not have a solid dustbin you should empty the contents into the toilet first.

## How will I feel?

It will naturally take time to adjust after having a Colostomy; it takes around three months for physical healing but mentally and emotionally may take longer, for some it can take up to a year. It is key to give yourself time to recover and adapt.

If you feel it is taking you longer or you are finding it difficult to adapt, please contact your Colorectal Nurse Specialist; we are here to offer you support. Also details about national and local support groups can be found at the back of this leaflet.

During the first weeks following surgery your emotions can feel very intense. It is beneficial to acknowledge any feelings of hurt, anger, sadness. These are normal emotions and talking through these feelings can be very helpful in your recovery process.

If you would like more information on body image please discuss this with your Colorectal Nurse Specialist.

## Can I take a bath or shower?

You can leave the appliance on and change it afterwards or dry it off with a towel or hairdryer.

Avoid using any oily or highly perfumed products which may irritate the skin around your stoma or prevent the appliance from sticking to your skin.

## Can I eat and drink anything?

You do not need to follow a special diet but some foods may affect your stoma function. As a general rule if something seems to cause a problem, try it a few times before you decide whether to avoid it in future.

## Foods that may cause wind or flatus

- High fibre cereals, beans or onions may increase the amount of wind and motion you pass
- Cauliflower, broccoli
- Onions, garlic
- Cabbage, spinach
- Mushrooms
- Eggs
- Beer
- Carbonated drinks

## What about rectal discharge?

If your rectum has not been removed, you may experience a build up of mucus which you will pass from time to time. If you are concerned about this, please contact your Colorectal Nurse for advice.

## Can I exercise?

You will probably need to spend time resting but keep active too. Start by taking a walk around the garden or up the street. Do not overdo it to start with so gradually increase your walks within your own limitations.

Allow at least three months before you do any strenuous exercise such as mowing the lawn or lifting heavy shopping, and build up gradually to reduce the chances of getting a hernia around either your stoma or your scar.

There is no reason why you cannot go swimming, if this is something you enjoy. It is also a good source of exercise. Please contact your Colorectal Nurse Specialist if you require any further advice or information about exercise.

## When can I drive?

For insurance purposes you need to be fit enough after surgery to be able to control your car and to do an emergency stop. Insurance companies do not stipulate any set timescale before driving so a common sense approach is advised. It is a good idea to take someone with you and to do a short trip when driving for the first time to see how it feels. A cheap gadget can be bought from motor shops; this loosens the seat belt if it is uncomfortable around your waist, but you must wear your seat belt. It is wise to tell your insurance company when you are ready to start driving again.

## What about holidays?

If it is less than three months since your surgery you may find it harder to get holiday insurance. After this, you may need special insurance within the first year. It is always a good idea to take double the number of appliances you would normally use when you go away on holiday. We have specific holiday advice and foreign language cards for travel abroad. Emergency stoma supplies can be sent abroad if something untoward should happen. Travel certificates can be obtained from your delivery company or Colorectal Nurse Specialist.

## What about relationships?

It will take time for you and those close to you to adjust after Colostomy surgery. If you are concerned that having a colostomy is affecting your relationships you may find it useful to discuss this with your Colorectal Nurse Specialist.

## What about my sex life?

In general there is no set time limit after surgery for resuming sex. Pelvic surgery can affect muscle and nerve function which can interfere with sexual and bladder function. If you are having problems after your operation and you are worried, please get in touch.

## What if I have a stoma problem?

If you have any problems with your stoma please ring for advice or to arrange a stoma clinic appointment.

## Useful Contacts

### **Colorectal Nurse Specialists:**

New Cross Hospital

01902 694084

Please note this number is an answer phone. Please leave your name and a brief message. Office hours 8:30-16:30 Monday-Friday

If you experience any problems following discharge out of office hours please contact the A9 surgical assessment unit.

### **Ward A9 Surgical Assessment Unit**

New Cross Hospital

01902 694003

**Ward A12 - General Surgical Ward (Female)**

New Cross Hospital

01902 694001

**Ward A14 - General Surgical Ward (Male)**

New Cross Hospital

01902 694002

**Colorectal Consultants**

01902 307999

Then ask for the Secretary of your Consultant.

**Wolverhampton Bowel Cancer Support Group**

01902 694084

**PALS**

Patient advice and liaison service

01902 695362

**Macmillan Cancer Support**

Information and support for people with cancer and those close to them

0808 800 0000

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

**Colostomy Association**

0800 3284257

[www.colostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.colostomyassociation.org.uk)

email: [cass@colostomyassociation.org.uk](mailto:cass@colostomyassociation.org.uk)

**RADAR**

National key scheme for access to public toilets for the disabled . The RADAR Key can be obtained from your local council.

Wolverhampton- 01902 555611

**Macmillan Information Centre**

New Cross Hospital

01902 695234

## Glossary

**Stoma:** - An opening on the abdomen created surgically, through which bowel contents may pass.

**Colostomy:** - A type of stoma from the large bowel through which semi-formed faeces are passed.

**Flange:** -The adhesive part of the bag which sticks onto the skin around the stoma to secure it.

**Appliance:** - The bag worn over the stoma to collect faeces as it passes out.

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。