

Helpful Tips

Wondering what you should and shouldn't
do when living with an ostomy?

Here's our best advice.



Comfort
Medical



Chris
Living with a colostomy

The time following your ostomy surgery can be a pretty steep learning curve – not only in dealing with the physical aftermath of the surgery itself, but in learning an entirely new way to take care of yourself. You may have a lot of questions about living with a stoma. **Here's some information to help you along the way, so that you can proactively manage your health.**

Keeping your skin healthy

Keeping the skin around your stoma in good condition is the most important thing you can do to make life with an ostomy secure, comfortable and worry-free. Unfortunately, skin issues are common among people with an ostomy, but this does not mean that they should be accepted. Here are some tips that you may find helpful.

- Make sure you know what healthy skin looks like. Peristomal skin should look similar to the skin on the other side of your abdomen: smooth and not irritated. Once you know what healthy skin looks like, you can watch for signs of skin irritation. Note that your skin may be a little pink immediately after you take off the adhesive barrier, but if this doesn't fade or if the skin is broken or damaged, your skin may be irritated.
- When you apply the barrier it's important to make sure your peristomal skin is healthy and dry. This will ensure the pouch stays in place between changes.
- Use a gentle removal technique to minimize risk of damage to skin. A skin cleanser wipe or an adhesive remover spray made specifically for around the stoma area may be helpful.
- Make sure your skin is clean and completely dry before applying the barrier.
- Cut the opening in the barrier to fit snug around your stoma.
- Make sure that there is full contact between the barrier and your skin. Apply light pressure with your hand over the pouching system and hold in place for at least 2 minutes to ensure an adequate seal.
- Change your pouching system as soon as you feel any discomfort, itching, or if leakage occurs.
- Make sure to use the pouching system and accessories most appropriate for your body profile.

The do's and don'ts of ostomy care

Wondering what you should and shouldn't do with your ostomy? **Here's what you need to know:**

The do's:

- Your stoma and your body changes over time. This means your pouching system may need to change as well. Some users experience that a product which had previously worked well begins to fail. Always remember that your product should fit you, not the other way around. Check the size of your stoma regularly – especially if you have a hernia – to ensure you have the best possible pouching solution for your body profile.
- Change your pouch when your stoma is least active, usually before eating and drinking, such as first thing in the morning. Change your pouch every 3 - 5 days or twice a week. Talk to your healthcare professional if you are changing your pouch more often than expected.
- Change your pouch promptly if itching, burning, or leakage occurs.
- Store ostomy supplies in a cool, dry place.

The don'ts:

- Avoid using everyday oil, creams, lotions, powders, baby wipes, isopropyl alcohol, steroidal medications, or ointments that can easily irritate the skin. Consult with your healthcare professional regarding topical agents.
- Don't use baby wipes or towelettes with lanolin, oils or fragrances. These may leave an oily residue which will interfere with pouch adherence.
- Don't use alcohol or other chemicals to clean around your stoma. This may irritate the skin.
- Don't flush products down the toilet.

Dealing with gas and odor

The fear of odor from the ostomy pouch is a natural concern to most people who have an ostomy. But remember, it's normal to pass gas and have stool odor. We all do. However, it is important to understand that you should not have an odor while wearing an intact ostomy pouch. If you have an ostomy that drains stool, you can no longer control when the gas will be released from the stoma. **What causes gas can differ – here are some general tips:**

- Gas can occur from swallowing air caused by drinking through a straw, chewing gum, talking while eating, sucking on hard candy and smoking.
- Get to know which foods cause you to have gas or odor. Keeping a food diary may help identify foods that cause more odor than usual. If you think a particular food is causing problems, try cutting it out for a while – then reintroduce it into your diet later. If you do this three times with any food suspected of causing gas, you'll know if that food is really the issue.
- Placing your arm over the stoma while passing gas may help muffle the sound.
- Talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist if you need medication to help manage gas.
- Pouches are made from an odor-resistant material. You should not have odor when the pouch is intact with no leakage, but expect odor to be present when emptying the pouch in the bathroom. And don't worry – this is the place where everyone has stool odor.
- You can use a pouch with a filter which deodorizes and releases gas.
- Most ostomy pouches prevent odor from escaping. However, you can use a pouch deodorant to further reduce odor. This deodorant is typically a liquid gel that you instill into your pouch after you have already applied the appliance.
- Gas and odor may be more bothersome for a colostomy than ileostomy, as there is more gas forming bacteria in the large intestine.

Managing your diet & nutrition

You may be wondering if you should change your diet. Most new ostomates do. It is a common misunderstanding that ostomates should be very cautious about what they eat. The truth is that, while you may need to make some changes to the foods you eat, you probably will not need to completely overhaul your eating habits, unless advised otherwise by your healthcare professional. **Here's what you need to know:**

Your healthcare professional may recommend following a low-fiber diet for the first 6 weeks after intestinal surgery. Your intestines are most likely swollen, and it may be harder to pass high fiber foods.

High fiber foods

Popcorn	Celery
Nuts	Meats with casings (hot dogs, sausages)
Fruits & vegetables with skins and seeds	Mushrooms
Coconut	Dried fruits
Chinese vegetables	Cabbage family

You can gradually add foods back into your diet – but eat slowly and chew your food well to aid digestion. If you have a colostomy, you should soon be able to eat whatever you want. If you have an ileostomy, you may always want to be cautious with high-fiber foods.

We all experience gas caused by certain foods. It's a good idea to be aware of the effects of food on your stool, as there are foods that loosen and thicken stool and those that cause gas and odor. If you think a particular food is causing problems, try cutting it out for a while – then reintroduce it into your diet later. If you do this three times with any suspect food, you'll know if it's really causing an issue.

Foods that loosen stool	Foods that thicken stool	Foods that cause gas and odor
High sugar drinks	Applesauce	Asparagus
Baked beans	Bananas	Cabbage family
Spicy foods	Boiled rice	Milk, eggs and cheese
Cabbage	Creamy peanut butter	Fish
Broccoli	Tapioca pudding	Corn
Milk	Potatoes without skins	Dried beans and peas
Raw vegetables and fruits	Cheese	Spicy foods
Chocolate	Pasta	Carbonated drinks
Fried foods	Marshmallows	Beer

Additional foods that can cause gas include broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, beans (green and baked), onions, garlic, brussels sprouts, cucumbers, sweetcorn and peas.

Drinks

As before your surgery, the amount of fluid you drink will affect the consistency of your output. As a rule of thumb, you should drink at least 2 liters or approximately 68 fluid ounces of liquid every day to avoid constipation and dehydration.

- It's very individual, but some people find fizzy drinks and beer tend to cause gas.
- You may consume alcohol with an ostomy however consult with your healthcare provider prior to consumption.
- Non-caffeinated beverages such as water and electrolyte replacement drinks are recommended to stay hydrated. Coffee and tea, although okay to drink, may be dehydrating.

How to stay active

Wondering whether you can live an active lifestyle with an ostomy? Absolutely! You can. Having an ostomy should not keep you from returning to exercise or the sport(s) you love. But build up slowly. What you can do now really just depends on what you did before. However, swimming and walking are recommended as they are both great low-impact ways to stay fit and maintain your energy level. **Here are a few tips to get you started: The biggest challenge for most ostomates to take part in exercise is psychological.**

- Ask your healthcare professional when you can return to exercise or sports activities.
- Remember that taking up exercise again should be a gradual process. Take it easy and return to your exercise routines slowly as your strength returns.
- Always empty your pouch before starting an activity.
- Be aware that pouch wear-time may vary with heavy exercise and perspiration.
- Layering a pair of lycra or stretch material swimming trunks underneath shorts will help hold your stoma pouch in place.

Types of activities

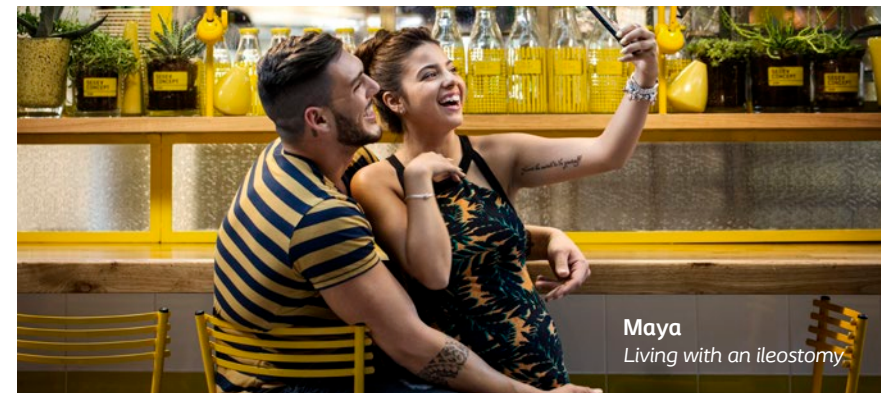
- Cycling, ball games, golf and similar sports usually do not cause problems, but you should avoid high-impact contact sports unless you have consulted with your healthcare professional.
- Approach weight lifting with caution. Consult your healthcare professional regarding support belts.
- If you are engaged in more strenuous exercise and work up a sweat, the barrier may be challenged. Therefore, always check your barrier prior to and during to exercise.
- If you engage in a contact sport, such as karate, talk to your healthcare professional. There are support belts/wraps on the market which can protect your stoma during such activities.

Intimacy with an ostomy

Following ostomy surgery, it's natural to have concerns about your body image. Your ostomy operation has changed your body and can take some getting used to, both for yourself and your partner. It is normal to feel sensitive about the change in your body image – take heart in knowing that this is normal. But it is not your ostomy that decides if you are able to have a satisfying sex life or other meaningful romantic relations.

Read our tips below:

- Talk with your healthcare professional about when it's safe to resume sexual activity.
- Be honest and have a conversation with your partner where you can both share your feelings and concerns. Avoid putting pressure on yourself and your partner: it's ok if it takes a little while before your intimate life is what it was before.
- Empty your pouch and check the pouch seal before intimacy.
- If needed, there are special mini pouches you can use for short periods of times such as intimacy, swimming, and sports activities, known as stoma caps.
- Pouch covers and specially designed underwear and lingerie may enhance your comfort.
- Seek professional help if you are unable to physically or emotionally return to a satisfying sexual relationship. Ask your healthcare professional for assistance.



Maya
Living with an ileostomy

Traveling with an ostomy

Planning on hitting the road? Your ostomy shouldn't prevent you from traveling. But it's nice to feel secure and comfortable while also keeping the surprises to a minimum. Getting organized in advance will help ensure that you have everything you need, no matter where you are going. **Here are a few tips to ensure worry-free travel:**

- The most important thing about traveling is to not forget your supplies. Make sure to pack what you need and bring extra supplies for unexpected events.
- Carry a list of supplies with product names and Comfort Medical's number in your purse or wallet.
- You may need to increase your fluid intake to avoid dehydration especially when traveling to warm climates.

If you are flying:

- Pack your supplies in carry-on luggage.
- Pre-cut your skin barriers to avoid the need for scissors on the plane.

If you are driving:

- Do not put supplies in the trunk where they will get overheated.
- Make sure the seatbelt does not rub the stoma. You can protect the stoma with a small pillow or towel if needed.



If you want to know more about Comfort Medical and what it's like living with an ostomy, please visit our blog at:

www.comfortmedical.com/blog

We will always call you when it's time for your reorder, but if you have any questions about your product or delivery, feel free to reach out to us:



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