



YOUR LINK SUPPORT TEAM

The practical advice service for
all ostomists

TELEPHONE FREE ON:
0800 282254

9am - 5pm Monday to Friday


Answerphone in operation outside working hours.

This service is open to anyone with a stoma or anyone interested in stoma care and is completely confidential.

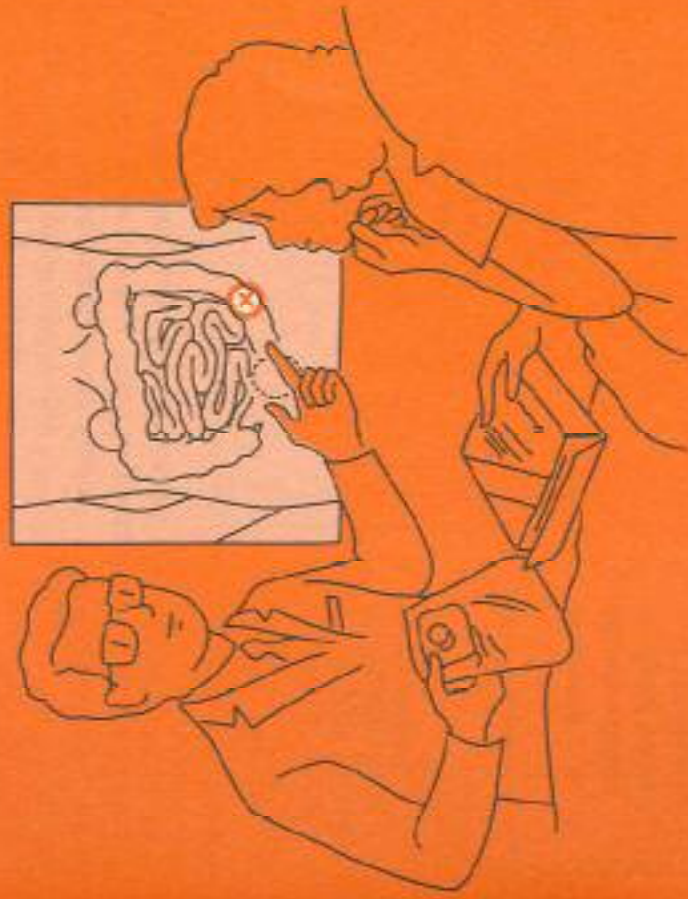
If you have any queries of a medical nature

please contact your Stoma Care Nurse or Doctor.

The LINK office holds an up-to-date directory of U.K. Stoma Care Nurses.

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LIVING WITH A STOMA



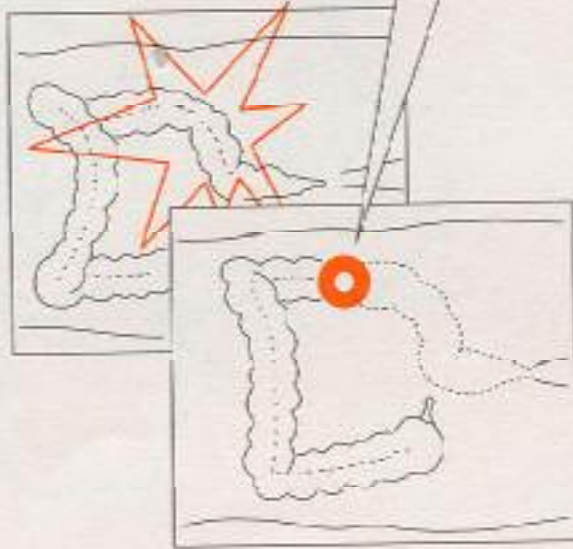
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WHAT IS A STOMA?

It's an opening on the body created by a surgical procedure (operation). With an abdominal stoma, body waste from the intestinal or urinary tract is passed through an opening on the abdomen.



DISEASE, ILLNESS OR AN OBSTRUCTION can prevent the body from getting rid of waste properly



This booklet is **NOT** a substitute for an informed discussion between a patient and his or her doctor or stoma care nurse of the procedures or suggestions described in this booklet.

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WHY SHOULD I LEARN ABOUT LIVING WITH A STOMA?

Because most people are unaware of its many benefits.

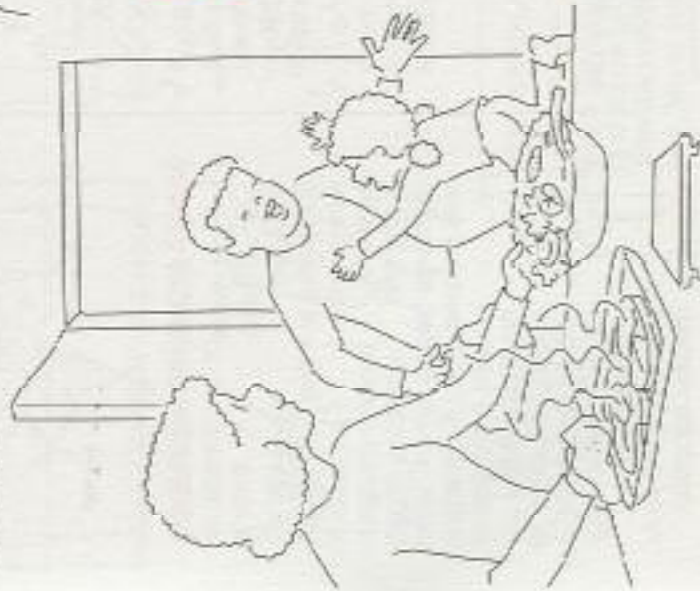
HAVING A STOMA CAN HELP:

- relieve pain and suffering
- prevent disease, infection or an obstruction from becoming more serious
- improve general health
- save lives.



MOST PEOPLE WHO HAVE A STOMA CAN:

- have rewarding careers
 - have children
 - be physically active
 - eat what they want (with few exceptions)
 - travel anywhere
 - lead active social lives.
- It may give people a new lease on life!



Learn more...

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

that may require a stoma include:

- ulcerative colitis
- Crohn's disease
- cancer
- diverticulitis
- obstruction
- birth defects
- injury or trauma
- familial polyposis (abnormal growths in the colon)
- chronic inflammation of the bladder or kidneys
- other conditions.



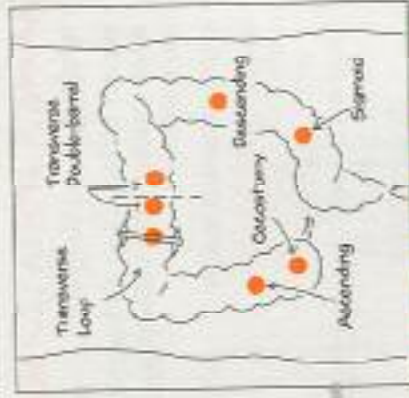
A stoma may be temporary or permanent, depending on the medical condition.

THERE ARE 3 TYPES OF OPERATIONS

to create an abdominal stoma.

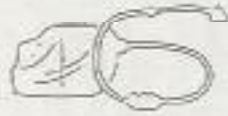
1 COLOSTOMY

A surgical opening is made from the large intestine (bowel or colon). There are 6 main types of colostomies.



MANAGEMENT METHODS

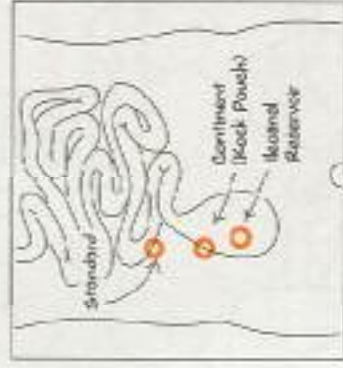
- In most cases, a pouch (also called an appliance) is worn to collect waste. Or, a plug and a discharge bag may be used.



- An enema (self-washout/irrigation) or natural elimination may be used, depending on the type of colostomy and your medical condition.

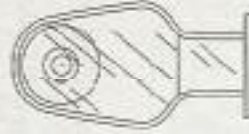
2 ILEOSTOMY

A surgical opening is made from the small intestine (ileum). The colon and the rectum may be removed. There are 3 main types of ileostomies:



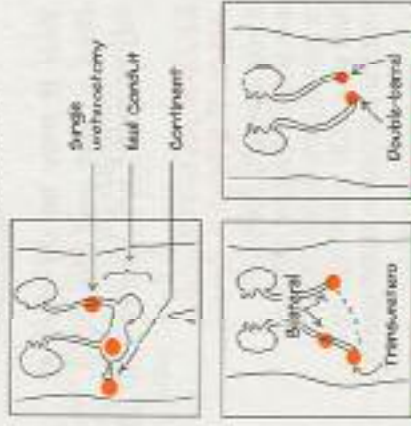
MANAGEMENT METHODS

- For standard ileostomies, an external pouch is used.
- For continent ileostomies, waste is stored in a surgically created pouch inside the body. A small tube (catheter) is used to empty the pouch.
- For ileocolic reservoirs, waste is passed by natural elimination.



3 UROSTOMY

A surgical opening diverts urine away from its normal path, usually to avoid a diseased or infected bladder. There are 6 main types of urostomies.



MANAGEMENT METHODS

- For continent urostomies, urine is stored in a surgically created pouch inside the body. The pouch is emptied with a catheter.
- An external pouch with an outlet tap is used for other types.



THE STOMA

(Surgical opening)

has a deep red or pink colour and will usually shrink for 4 to 8 weeks after the operation. The stoma can't feel pain or the passage of waste.



WILL I BE ABLE TO ADJUST TO LIVING WITH A STOMA?

Yes! It may be difficult at first — but you can do it. The adjustment will be easier if you:

LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT STOMA CARE

If you have any questions, ask your consultant, doctor or stoma care nurse (SCN). Ask your SCN to arrange for a visit from a local support group.



ESTABLISH GOALS

Now that you're on the road to good health, plan how you're going to enjoy what life has to offer!

Remember, a stoma isn't a disability unless you let it become one. You can live the life you want!



EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

At first, you may feel angry or insecure. Talk over these feelings with someone you trust, or, if possible, another person who's had a similar operation.



HOW CAN I MANAGE MY STOMA?

By learning about self-care — and by keeping a positive attitude.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR POUCH

Pouches come in many styles and are designed to fit individual needs. They'll help free you from worries about spills, leaks or odour.



YOUR SCN WILL HELP YOU CHOOSE A POUCH

that is:

- odourproof
- leakproof
- flexible
- lightweight
- easy-to-use
- comfortable
- non-irritating to the skin.

You will be given information on how and where to obtain pouches and other equipment before leaving the hospital.

For sources of advice, see page 14.

Use a pouch that you have confidence in.

LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR POUCH

While in the hospital, your SCN will show you the proper way to use your pouch.

SOME SELF-CARE TIPS

- Read all instructions.
- Use equipment designed for your pouch (belt, closure, tape, skin barrier, deodorant, etc.).
- Have all necessary equipment within reach.
- Wash hands before and after you remove or change the pouch.
- Centre the pouch over your stoma carefully when you put it on. (Stand and use a mirror or paper guide strip for help.)
- Empty the pouch when 1/3 full, and before you go to bed.
- Sit on the toilet seat or a chair and empty your pouch into the toilet.



If you have any questions or concerns, ask your doctor or SCN.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR SKIN

Waste products can irritate the skin surrounding your stoma, so special care is required.

SELF-CARE TIPS

- Make sure your pouch fits properly, sticks well and doesn't leak.
- Change your pouch as recommended.
- Measure your stoma frequently to be sure the pouch you use is the proper size.
- Gently clean the skin surrounding the stoma each time you remove the pouch.
 - Use lots of warm water and, if necessary, only mild soap to clean the skin.
 - Don't use creams, powders, etc., unless recommended by your doctor or SCN.
 - Pat your skin dry, then air dry -- don't rub.



NOTE: Your stoma probably won't need to be cleaned because it's made of body tissue that is normally in contact with waste products.

MORE SKIN-CARE TIPS

CHECK FOR SKIN PROBLEMS whenever you remove your pouch. Look for:

- a rash
- redness
- sores
- blisters
- bleeding
- weeping (oozing).



TAKE CARE OF MINOR SKIN IRRITATIONS

Follow these tips:

- Wash affected area with mild soap and warm water only.
- Use a hair dryer on a cool setting to dry skin, if necessary.
- Don't dry a rash with a heat lamp.
- Make sure the pouch is secure and doesn't leak.
- Don't use ointments or creams unless recommended by your doctor or SCN.
- Change your pouch as recommended.



CHECK YOUR STOMA

At times, your stoma may bleed slightly when you change the pouch or clean the surrounding skin. It is not a cause for concern.



CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR OR SCN IMMEDIATELY IF:

- your stoma bleeds excessively, has a black colour, is swollen or sunken, or has a strong, lasting odour
- you have any unusual changes in body waste
- minor skin irritations last more than a few days
- any problem becomes severe or causes pain
- you have any questions or concerns.

LIVE THE LIFE YOU WANT

Start by overcoming these two common worries:

HOW DO I ELIMINATE ODOUR?

- Use an odourproof pouch and/or a flatus filter (to let the wind escape).
- Make sure the pouch is well sealed around the stoma.
- Use a pouch deodorant (drops or powder).
- Avoid foods that cause odour or wind, such as beans or asparagus.
- Eat foods that are natural deodorants, such as applesauce, cranberry juice and yoghurt.

A stoma and odour don't have to go together.



WHAT CAN I EAT?

Usually, whatever you want. Here are some tips:

- Ask your doctor or SCN when you can resume a normal diet.
- Try only one food that you haven't eaten since surgery, each day.
- Avoid foods that cause diarrhoea.
- Take small bites and chew well.
- Drink plenty of water -- about 8 glasses per day.
- Never take any medicine unless you have your doctor's approval.

Experiment -- and enjoy!

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What about love and friendship?

The only thing that can help you back is your attitude.

- Have a positive attitude.
- Communicate honestly with others.
- Keep your sense of humour.

• Always practice good hygiene so you'll feel clean and confident.

NOTE: Most people with a stoma can enjoy a healthy sex life. If you have questions, ask your doctor or SCN.

What about exercise?

You should be able to do just about anything. Consult your doctor before you begin.

- Choose an activity you enjoy
- Start slowly and build up gradually
- Use the proper equipment
- Use caution when lifting heavy objects, especially during the first year after surgery.
- Contact your doctor if you feel pain, or have any problems

Can I travel?

Yes -- you can travel wherever you like!

- Always take plenty of supplies (pouches, skin barrier, etc.).
- Keep your supplies with you on the plane, train, car or coach.
- Obtain a list of doctors and/or SCNs in the area you'll be visiting.
- Take steps to prevent diarrhoea. (If necessary, use bottled water for drinking and irrigation.)

What about my career?

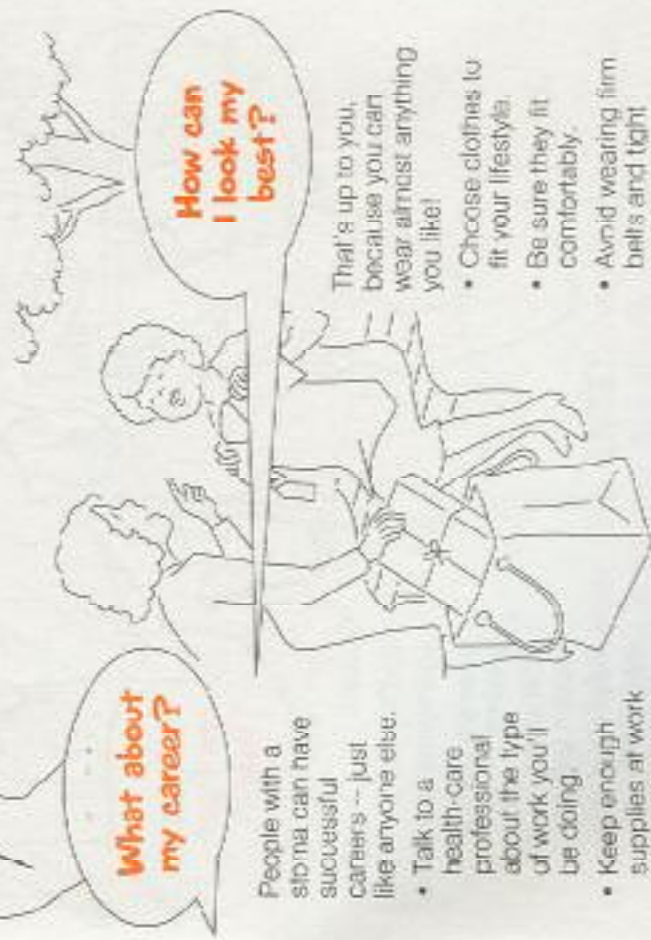
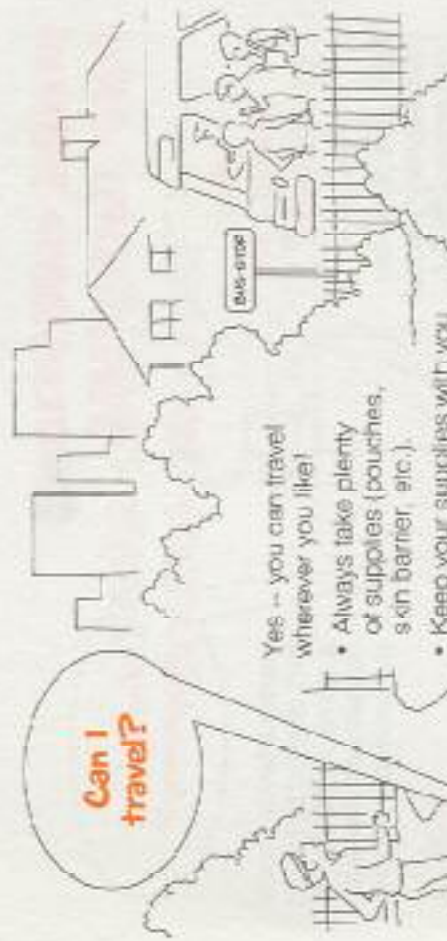
People with a stoma can have successful careers -- just like anyone else.

- Talk to a health-care professional about the type of work you'll be doing
- Keep enough supplies at work for your needs.

How can I look my best?

That's up to you, because you can wear almost anything you like!

- Choose clothes to fit your lifestyle.
- Be sure they fit comfortably
- Avoid wearing firm belts and tight waistbands directly over your stoma.



MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What should I tell others?

That's up to you... tell them whatever you feel comfortable with. But, remember, when you answer questions honestly, you help teach others the facts about a stoma.

What about pregnancy?

Having a family usually isn't affected by having a stoma. However, consult your doctor to discuss your concerns.

Where can I get help?

Contact:

- your doctor
- your stoma care nurse
- other people with a stoma
- local stoma support groups
- suppliers of stoma equipment
- local pharmacists.

So -

YOUR LIFE IS YOURS TO LIVE!

LEARN

all you can about your stoma.

FOLLOW

your doctor's and SCN's instructions

KEEP

a positive attitude.

SEEK HELP

if you need it.

All over the world, people with a stoma are leading rewarding lives. You can, too!