Ileostomy Information

An ileostomy is an opening made in the belly (*abdominal wall*) by surgery. The end of the lowest part of the small intestine (the *ileum*) is brought through the abdominal wall to form a *stoma.* This is a hole made by surgery. It is called an ileostomy. Digested food passes through it. An ileostomy may be performed when there is:

- Disease of the large bowel (*colon*) - like cancer.
- A colon injury that cannot be treated with medicine.

SOME REASONS FOR SURGERY ARE:

- Ulcerative colitis.
- Familial polyposis.
- Crohn's disease

ILEOSTOMY CARE

A pouching system is usually worn. Disposable or reusable pouches are available. These pouches or bags work as collection pools for the waste that comes from the bowel. The waste leaves through the ostomy on the belly and goes into the bag. Ostomy supplies are available at drug stores, medical supply houses, and on the internet.

LIVING WITH AN ILEOSTOMY

- **Work.** An ileostomy should not interfere with work. Jobs needing very heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) may be an exception. People with ileostomies are successful business people, teachers, carpenters, welders, etc.
- **Sex and social life.** Physically, the creation of an ileostomy usually does not affect sexual function. The ileostomy itself should not interfere with normal sexual activity or pregnancy. It does not prevent one from dating, getting married, or having children.
- **Clothing.** Usually one is able to wear the same clothing as before surgery. This includes swim-wear.
- **Sports and activities.** With a securely attached pouch, one can swim, camp out, play baseball and participate in nearly all types of sports. Caution is advised in heavy bodily contact sports. Travel is not restricted in any way. Bathing and showering may be done with or without the pouch in place.
- **Diet.** Usually there are no dietary restrictions. Usually one can enjoy foods as before.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Caregivers and medical professionals are the first source of help. Specially trained nurses called Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses (WOCN) are available for consultation in most major medical centers.

Visit the following resources:
United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc. web site at www.uoaa.org/
Phone: 1-800-826-0826

International Ostomy Association at www.ostomyinternational.org/

Most of this information courtesy of the United Ostomy Association

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