Ostomy Support Information

An *ostomy* is an opening in the belly (*abdominal wall*) made by surgery. *Ostomates* are people who have had this procedure. The opening (*stoma*) allows the kidney or bowel to discharge waste. An external pouch covers the stoma to collect waste. Pouches are are a simple bag and are odor free. Different companies have disposable or reusable pouches to fit one's lifestyle. An ostomy can either be temporary or permanent.

THERE ARE THREE MAIN TYPES OF OSTOMIES

- **Colostomy**. A colostomy is a surgically created opening in the large intestine (*colon*).
- **Ileostomy**. An ileostomy is a surgically created opening in the small intestine.
- **Urostomy**. A urostomy is a surgically created opening to divert urine away from the bladder.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Will I need to be on a special diet?**
  Most people return to their normal diet when they have recovered from surgery. Be sure to chew your food well, eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids. If you experience problems with a certain food, wait a couple of weeks and try it again.
- **Will there be odor and noises?**
  Pouching systems are designed to be odor-proof or odor-resistant. There are deodorants that can be used in the pouch. Medications are also available to help reduce odor. Limit gas-producing foods and carbonated beverages. You will experience less gas and fewer noises as you heal from surgery.
- **How much time will it take to care for my ostomy?**
  At first, you may spend a lot of time learning about your ostomy and how to take care of it. As you become more comfortable and skilled at changing the pouching system, it will take very little time to care for it.
- **Will I be able to return to work?**
  People with ostomies can perform most jobs. As soon as you have healed from surgery, you should be able to return to work. Heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) may be discouraged.
- **What about intimacy?**
  Sexual relationships and intimacy are important and fulfilling aspects of your life. They should continue after ostomy surgery. Intimacy-related concerns should be discussed openly between you and your partner.
- **Can I wear regular clothing?**
  You do not need to wear special clothing. Ostomy pouches are fairly flat and barely noticeable. Elastic undergarments will not hurt the stoma or prevent the ostomy from functioning.
- **Can I participate in sports?**
  An ostomy should not limit your involvement in sports. Many people with ostomies are runners, skiers, swimmers or participate in other active lifestyles. Talk with your caregiver first before doing heavy physical activity.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

Resources are available if you need help or have questions about your ostomy.

- Specially trained nurses called Wound, Ostomy Continence Nurses (WOCN) are available for consultation in most major medical centers.
- The United Ostomy Association (UOA) is a group made up of many local chapters throughout the United States. These local groups hold meetings and provide support to prospective and existing ostomates. They sponsor educational events and have qualified visitors to make personal or telephone visits. Contact the UOA for the chapter nearest you and for other educational publications.
  - More detailed information can be found in Colostomy Guide, a publication of the United Ostomy Association (UOA). Contact UOA at 1-800-826-0826 or visit their web site at www.uoaa.org. The website contains links to other sites, suppliers and resources.

Most of this information courtesy of the United Ostomy Association.

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