



## Stoma frequently asked questions

### **Do I need to wear different clothing once I have a urostomy pouch?**

Not particularly, but clothes should be comfortable and not constrict the stoma at all.

Depending on the position of your stoma, your body shape and the particular pouch you are wearing, you may need to consider where your waistband sits, how visible your pouch is under clothes and what you feel most comfortable wearing (physically and emotionally). People often find darker colours and patterned fabrics more camouflaging in general. If men are struggling with the belt around their trousers/shorts being too tight across their stomal area, they may consider using braces, these can be worn under the shirt, if leaving the shirt untucked.

### **How often should I change the pouch?**

This is very individual, and dependent on many variables and sometimes personal preference. If you are using a 1 piece pouch and changing it more than daily then contact a stomal therapy nurse for review. A 2 piece pouching system that has a separate baseplate may only need changing 2-3 times per week. Your stomal therapy nurse will help guide you in the beginning and once you have recovered from surgery and settling into a routine you will find the frequency that is most suitable for you. Remember that weather may also mean a change in frequency as the adhesives respond to moisture and sweat from the skin.

### **Do people often get leaks or accidents?**

Leaks can occur, for a variety of reasons, and if these are happening often you should contact a stomal therapy nurse for review. Adjustments to your stoma care routine may be necessary from time to time, and it is usually recommended to see a stomal therapy nurse every 1-2 years, even if not having issues, to ensure your stoma care routine is always optimal. Always carry spare equipment and spare clothes when you are out, just in case.

### **Is a 1 piece pouch or a 2 piece pouch better?**

All pouches have unique benefits and it will vary considerably what is suitable for each and every person. The base of a 2 piece system is not designed to be changed every day, so if daily changing is necessary or preferred then a 1 piece system is best. Discuss options with your stomal therapy nurse, you can trial different products anytime there is a need to.

### **Can I travel?**

Once your doctor is happy for you to travel, then yes, absolutely. When travelling always take extra supplies with you, and if flying, always carry your stomal supplies as hand luggage with you, do not put them into your checked baggage. If travelling for an extended period then discuss with your ostomy association re ordering extra supplies ahead of time.



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### **Can I still play sport - anything that I should avoid?**

Most sports and activities are encouraged, stoma or no stoma, and it is important to get back to the things you enjoy as soon as you are physically able to do so. Just ensure that your stoma is not at risk of direct forceful trauma. There are some products on the market to help protect a stoma or ensure extra security when participating in vigorous sports. Always stay well hydrated and remember that you may sweat more when participating in sport, especially in hot and humid weather, so check your pouch adhesion regularly.

### **Can I swim?**

Absolutely. Ostomy pouches are lined with plastic and watertight if the base is well adhered to the abdomen. Always ensure your pouch is freshly applied and secure, and empty prior to swimming. Swimsuit choices are individual, and for women the choices are many, while men often prefer board shorts and a rashie. Always check your stoma pouch regularly to ensure it is staying secure, remembering the longer you are immersed in water the more likely the edges will soften and start to lift. Another change after swimming may be necessary, so go prepared with extra equipment. Most fabric coverings on the pouch will air dry with time, a hairdryer can help (do not use a hot setting) or as mentioned, choose to change the pouch after swimming to a dry one.

### **Can I go in a spa?**

As per the swimming response, ensure your pouch is well secure prior, and check it regularly. The water temp in a spa is often warm, so this may also affect the adherence of the pouch over time. Limit time immersed if feeling uncertain. Do not allow forceful spa jets to be directed near or over the stoma area. Also choose a swimsuit that assists to keep your pouch firmly against your abdomen or use a waistband to keep the pouch flat so the effervescent water does not push your pouch upwards.

### **What products can you get to support the pouch under clothes or disguise it?**

There are several products on the market. Pouch covers, specially designed lingerie for women, waistbands, sports belts and hernia support garments. Your stomal therapy nurse or ostomy association can often provide some information on different products available if an internet search is not helpful or easy for you to do.



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### **How long does a stoma last for? 20 years?**

There is no use by date for a stoma, so long as the stoma is healthy, functioning normally and there are no other significant complications, then it may last a lifetime. The stoma may change shape and size over time though, especially if there is weight gain or loss or you develop a parastomal hernia. Ensure you re-measure the size from time to time, and alter the hole in your adhesive base accordingly. See a stomal therapy nurse if needed.

### **How do I know if I have a urinary infection?**

Your urine should be clear and yellow (it may appear darker first thing in the morning), mucous threads are often normal, remembering that your ileal conduit is made from a piece of small bowel usually and as such there will be some mucous secreted by that bowel tissue present in your urine. Symptoms of a urinary infection may include: cloudy urine, blood in the urine, feeling unwell, fevers, back pain and if any of these are present you should see a doctor as soon as possible. Always collect a urine sample for testing fresh from the stoma, not from a used pouch, so attend the doctor prepared for a pouch change. Ensure hands are clean and after pouch removal and cleansing stoma and skin with warm water, hold the urine jar just under the stoma until a ml or 2 of urine drips into the jar, this is plenty for a test to be done, you do not need to fill the jar. Bowel bacteria (from the piece of bowel used for the conduit) is often seen in a urine specimen from an ileal conduit so the doctor should write on the pathology form that the urine has been collected from a stoma.

### **What is a parastomal hernia?**

A hernia can be a common complication of having a stoma. When a stoma is formed a hole is made in the abdominal muscle to bring the stoma through and out on to the skin. This hole is a weak spot and the bowel that normally sits behind the abdominal muscle can move through this hole and sit in the space between the muscle and the abdominal wall. It is usually seen as a bulge around or next to the stoma. As long as the stoma continues to look healthy, function normally and there is no significant pain then don't panic. It is advisable to see your surgeon at some point to review the stomal area and offer any advice necessary. Many people with a hernia need no specific treatment but there may be precautions to be aware of. There is also some evidence that wearing an abdominal support garment may decrease the risk of a hernia, so discuss with your doctor and your stomal therapy nurse, if this has not been discussed at the time of your surgery.



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### **How do I find a stomal therapy nurse?**

If you live close to the hospital where you had your surgery done, then call the Stomal therapy nurse/s to discuss how to arrange a review when needed.

If you have moved away, or can no longer access your stomal therapy nurse, then a search can be done for someone in your area. Go to [www.stomatherapy.com](http://www.stomatherapy.com) and click on "Find a Stomal Nurse", and search per Australian state.

Many stoma associations also have a stomal therapy nurse service, so also discuss with them if you have need for review. For a list of Stoma Associations in Australia go to [www.australianstoma.com.au/associations](http://www.australianstoma.com.au/associations)