



Living with a **Stoma**



www.fittleworth.com

Opening Hours:
8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday
9 am to 1 pm Saturday

National: 0800 378 846
Scotland: 0800 783 7148

Living with a stoma

Fittleworth has been delivering stoma goods to customers' homes since 1984 and in that time we have gained many hints and tips for dealing with some common problems.

Whatever type of stoma you have, you will want to get your life back to normal after surgery. Modern medicine and the discreet and efficient design of current stoma pouches mean that this can happen very quickly and there is no reason why you cannot continue to do all the things you did before.

What is a stoma?

A stoma is a surgically created opening on the surface of the abdomen. The stoma is made from the colon or ileum to allow the flow of faeces or urine.

What kind of stomas are there?

There are many types of stoma, but we will only concentrate on those for the bowel and urinary system.

- **A Colostomy** can be made at almost any point along the large bowel (colon). Where the Colostomy is created will depend on the medical reason, but generally they are located on the lower left hand side of the abdomen. The output may be almost fully formed stools and wind is common
- **A Ileostomy** is made from the small intestine (Ileum); usually it will be located on the lower right hand side of the abdomen. The output is generally liquid to paste-like stools and can be corrosive due to the presence of digestive enzymes
- **A Urostomy** is a diversion which drains urine and is made using the small bowel. It is generally located on the abdomen on the lower right hand side. The output may contain mucus as a portion of the small bowel is used to form the stoma

Stomas can be permanent or temporary, depending on the reason for creating them. You may have a temporary stoma for just a month or it may be 2 or 3 years.

A temporary stoma is often a loop or double-barrel stoma which has two openings and any output will emerge from the largest one.

A permanent stoma is constructed if it is unlikely that the portions of the digestive segments can be rejoined or in the case of a Urostomy. Permanent stomas are usually end stomas (not loop) and only have one opening.

What should my stoma be like?

Your stoma should be red in colour similar to the inside of the mouth; this is due to the rich blood supply to the stoma. If the colour of the stoma changes, turns pale, dusky or darker then please contact your stoma nurse.

You may find that your stoma bleeds when wiped, this is normal and is again due to the rich blood supply very close to the surface.

Your stoma will have no feeling when you touch it as there are no nerves in the bowel tissue. Your stoma should also feel warm to the touch.

A stoma will usually be raised above the skin to form a spout and this allows the output to flow into the pouch more easily.

Getting your stoma appliances the quick and easy way?

By post

Send your prescription in one of the envelopes that we provide or to our address; Fittleworth Freepost, Hawthorn Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 7LT.

On our Freephone number

For England and Wales Customer Service team call: **0800 378 846**.

In Scotland we have a designated Customer Service team call: **0800 783 7148**.

Order call reminder

We can arrange to contact you on a pre-arranged date to check your stock levels, and where necessary place an order in line with your requirements.

Online

www.fittleworth.com

- Be mindful of the busy periods around Bank Holidays, especially Christmas and Easter by ordering early
- Plan ahead for your holiday
- We can collect your prescriptions from your GP or you can send them in to us. Alternatively, your GP can send your prescriptions electronically to us. To find out more about this service, please speak to your GP or call us on **0800 378 846**
- Set up a monthly order, one of our customer service advisors will contact you on the same day each month and check your stock levels
- Try not to hoard stock as appliances will go out of date and may become less effective

Hints and Tips

Applying your pouch

Try to change your pouch when your stoma is less active. It may take some time to get to know or recognise a pattern, but it could help to make changing quicker and easier.

- Applying a pouch may be easier if the flange is warmed slightly; holding it between your hands for a short while will bring it to body temperature
- If you have wrinkles or folds in the skin around your stoma, try standing up or changing position to stretch skin, it will give you a better fit
- Always check for nicks or faults before using your pouch. If a fault is found, you can return the box and we will replace it for you
- Your pouch must fit properly around your stoma to help prevent sore skin and reduce the possibility of leakage; use the backing from the flange to check the pouch 'hole' is the right size for you
- If you need your pouch cut to size to fit more comfortably you can ask us to do this for you free of charge. To organise this either call us or speak to your specialist nurse
- Use the 'up and over' technique to apply your pouch. Remove the backing paper almost fold the flange backwards in half and starting at the bottom of the flange and stoma edge, stick the flange to the skin bringing it up and over the stoma. Once the pouch is in place run your fingers around the edge to check for any creases or folds
- You can then place your hand over the pouch for 30 seconds and the heat from the hands helps the pouch adhere and conform to your body shape. This technique is easier to demonstrate and if in doubt you can contact your stoma nurse for guidance

Bathing

If you bathe with a pouch, do not try to remove it immediately afterwards as this can lead to sore skin. The adhesive is stronger when wet and becomes harder to remove. You can bathe or shower without an appliance if you wish.

A good soak in the bath will give the skin around the stoma a chance to rest. Be aware that your stoma might function while you are bathing or showering, especially if you are an ileostomist.

Do not use bubble bath or bath oils as they may stop the pouch sticking securely afterwards and can irritate your stoma.

If you have a power shower, the water jets can be very powerful and if directed onto your stoma, especially at close range, might cause problems.

Public Toilets

- As an Ostomist, you can use disabled toilet facilities, these are often cleaner than other public toilets and have more space and surfaces to lay out your items.
- You can obtain a RADAR key for many disabled public toilets, either through the RADAR website www.radar.org.uk, your nurse or us at Fittleworth
- Put a couple of sheets of toilet paper in the bowl before emptying your pouch, it reduces the noise and splashing
- Flush the toilet immediately after emptying your pouch, it can help reduce odour
- Always have paper or wipes with you for use in public toilets as they often run out
- A bottle of water can be handy when you need to clean up
- Use only plain lukewarm water and dry wipes for cleaning your stoma. If you must use wet wipes, then make sure they are lanolin and fragrance free as the skin around your stoma can be very sensitive



Clothing

Having a stoma does not mean you need to have any special clothing; you should be able to dress just as you did before. High waisted clothes are often more comfortable and discreetly hide your pouch.

Ask for your pouch flange to be cut off centre towards the top of the flange, this will make it hang lower and more discreetly. Many people find that tucking the pouch into their underwear makes them feel more secure.

Lycra type clothing provides excellent and effective support so look out for these in high street stores. Support wear is available, often on prescription. Remember, we can deliver many types of support wear too.

If you wear an appliance belt, make sure it is at the same level as the stoma to avoid an upward drag. Make sure your belt or trouser waist lines do not rub on your stoma, this can be very uncomfortable.

A sports protector (like a cricketer's box) can be worn to protect the stoma while playing physical contact sports.

Eating Out

- Don't let your stoma restrict what you eat, just become a little more organised
- Keep a food diary, this will enable you to know what food affects you, so if you want to eat something that you know will increase your output you can be prepared
- Try new foods at home first, that way you can see what effect they have without embarrassment
- Dine out as much as you like, just tailor your choice from the menu to foods that you are confident eating
- Eat regularly and don't skip meals, this helps more predictable functioning of your stoma
- More advice on diet, wind, odour and their causes can be found in the Dietary Advice leaflet, available from Fittleworth

Sexual Relations

Do talk to your stoma care nurse about resuming sexual relations, they can reassure you in many ways and will be a useful source of information.

Talk to your partner about how you feel, be gentle and take your time, your confidence will improve over time and will help put at rest some of the fears.

Use smaller appliances as they can be more discreet.

Empty your pouch beforehand.

Secure your pouch to your tummy or fold it in half. Pouch covers are available or try tying a scarf around your waist to cover your pouch or stoma.





Before you travel tips

- Cut your flanges to fit your stoma
- Open all of your boxes and check they are all correct. If there are any problems, it is better to find out before you leave than when you arrive
- Spread your pouches around your luggage, hand luggage and travelling companions' luggage, it is a practical way to ensure you will have some available when you arrive. Remember to pack your scissors in your main luggage
- Cotton pouch covers are available to help stop your pouch sticking to your skin in hot weather
- Take a good supply of antidiarrhoea tablets with you
- Avoid salads washed in local water or ice in your drinks, this can often be a source of an upset stomach
- Travel passports are available which explain in a variety of languages about your stoma and why you are carrying stoma products. These can be shown to any officials you may have to deal with
- Hot weather can affect the adhesive on your pouch, so keep them in a cool, shady place (DO NOT put them in the fridge!). You may find you need to change your pouch more often as sweating and the heat will affect the adhesion, so take more supplies than you would normally use

Ileostomists

If you use a pouch with a clip, always carry a spare in case the original is lost or breaks.

Colostomists

Take some drainable pouches with you on holiday in case you get an upset stomach. Stoma caps are available for Colostomists to use when swimming; they are NOT suitable for Ileostomists.

If your destination requires you to drink bottled water, you can also use this to clean or irrigate your Colostomy.



WORLD ASSIST ALLIANCE

Fittleworth is the exclusive UK member of the World Assist Alliance; a network dedicated to helping stoma and continence customers with **emergency goods** when abroad on holiday or business.

World Assist Alliance Network Coverage

To find out which countries are part of the World Assist Alliance network, please call our Customer Service team on 01903 731244.

How World Assist Alliance Works

Simply call your normal Fittleworth contact number with your details and we will do the rest.

Terms and Conditions apply, please see our leaflet for full information, or contact our Customer Services team on **0800 378 846**.



POST...

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