After colostomy surgery it’s very natural for you to have questions about self-care and your diet. It’s an experience that has changed your life and until you become more comfortable with these changes, some anxiety is normal. However, you can lessen your anxiety by learning more about self-care and diet.

Emptying your ostomy pouch
A common guideline is to empty your pouch when it is \( \frac{1}{3} \) to \( \frac{1}{2} \) full, or more often if you desire. A full pouch can get heavy and cause the adhesive backing on your barrier to loosen from your skin. Emptying the pouch is also more difficult when it’s full. Refer to the “Instructions for Use” for your particular pouching system.

In this article:
- Emptying and changing your ostomy pouch
- How to manage gas and odor
- Addressing constipation and diarrhea
Changin\n
Changin\n
Applying your pouch
In the first six to eight weeks after your colostomy surgery, the size of your stoma should gradually decrease (if you are concerned about how your stoma is healing, contact your doctor or WOC nurse). During this time, it is very important to measure your stoma every time you change your pouching system.

Additional self-care guidance
Bathing
Showering and bathing will not hurt your stoma or your pouching system. Some people prefer to shower without their pouching system on the days they change their pouch and barrier. You can decide what works best for you.

Helpful tips:
• Cut the barrier opening to the size of your stoma without leaving skin exposed
• Apply the skin barrier directly to clean, dry skin
• Avoid the use of any moisturizers around the stoma
• Ensure no skin is showing between the barrier and stoma to prevent skin irritation and leakage
• Apply gentle pressure to skin barrier for about a minute for the best adhesion
Remember to avoid using bath oils, or soaps with moisturizers and perfumes. These products may make it harder for the barrier to stick to your skin. Have all of your materials ready before you bathe, so your pouching system can be easily applied afterwards.

**When away from home**
When you're away from home, even for a short time, it's a good idea to carry an extra pouching system and plastic storage bags for disposal. Leakage shouldn't happen, but if it does you will want to be prepared. On hot days, do not leave extra supplies in your car.

**When to call your WOC Nurse**
Call your nurse if you have any medical concerns about your stoma, including:

- A change in the size or appearance of your stoma
- A skin rash or irritated skin around your stoma
- Discomfort or problems with pouching
- Frequent leaking
- A weight loss or gain that causes problems with your pouching system

**Dietary guidelines**
Below are some general dietary guidelines that are helpful for people with a colostomy. However, if your doctor has recommended a special diet, you should follow that advice.

**How to manage gas**
Having gas is normal. You might find that certain foods give you gas or cause some discomfort. Everyone responds differently. If you think a particular food is causing problems, avoid it for a while and reintroduce into your diet later. It may take five or six hours from the time you eat until gas passes from your stoma. Gas can also develop from the way you eat, so you should eat slowly. It will also help to avoid chewing gum, drinking through a straw and talking with food in your mouth.

You can buy products at the drug store to help reduce gas. In addition, gas filters are now available on most colostomy pouches. The charcoal filter allows for gas to be deodorized before leaving the pouch. Sometimes liquid stool could eventually clog the filter, at which time the pouch can be changed.

Foods that cause gas in one person don't necessarily cause gas in everyone, so take note of what foods affect you.
Gas-producing foods and drinks:
- Cabbage
- Spinach
- Cucumbers
- Beans
- Brussels sprouts
- Onions / garlic
- Broccoli / cauliflower
- Sweet corn
- Peas
- Carbonated drinks such as soda and beer

How to manage odor
The only time you or anyone else should notice an odor is when you are emptying your colostomy pouch. Even then, pouch odor can be reduced with special drops (one type of drops is the Brava® Lubricating Deodorant made by Coloplast). You simply put the drops in when the pouch has been emptied, or when you put on a new pouch. The next time you empty your pouch, the drops should reduce the amount of odor and help drain stool from the pouch.

Some people prefer to carry bathroom deodorizer with them. This can be helpful when using a restroom in a public place.

Foods that cause stool odor:
- Fish
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Turnips
- Garlic
- Beans
- Vegetables in the cabbage family

Constipation and diarrhea
Sometimes you might get constipated just as you did before your colostomy surgery. To help prevent constipation, eat a diet high in fiber, fruits, vegetables and grains (for instance, cereals). As long as your doctor gives you the OK, drink about six to eight glasses of liquid a day. You might consider a laxative if the constipation doesn’t go away. However, it’s important to check with your doctor first, to see if that’s right for you.

Sometimes you may have diarrhea just as you did before your colostomy surgery. Loose, runny stools can be caused by a flu-like illness, your body’s reaction to food, or a medication such as an antibiotic. When you have diarrhea your body loses water, sodium and potassium. You’ll need to drink plenty of extra fluids, including an eight-ounce glass of water every time you empty your pouch. Sports drinks can help you replace sodium and potassium.

If you have three or more consecutive loose stools, however, you should contact your doctor.

Foods that can thicken stool:
- Pudding
- Creamy peanut butter
- Potatoes
- Bread
- Pasta
- Baked apples / applesauce
- Cheese
- Rice

Additional thoughts
Soon after your surgery, caring for and managing your ostomy is all new to you, but when you get used to it these activities become a daily routine.

Remember that your surgery represents a change to your body only. You can still live a full life.

Call your healthcare provider if you have any medical concerns about managing your ostomy. You may also contact your Coloplast Consumer Care Advisor for product usage and availability questions at 1-877-858-2656.