

# Tips for dining out



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**Y**ou may have stayed close to home for a few months, while your body gradually adapted to having an ostomy. If you have an ileostomy, your gastrointestinal (GI) tract needed to adjust, too. That's why it was recommended that you initially ate simple, basic foods and gradually added other foods into your diet. But if your doctor has given the green light to resume a normal diet, take advantage of that. Resuming a social life – and dining out – is a welcome change for most people.

### Dining out

When you do go out to dinner, try to time your outing to coincide with your regular meal schedule. People with an ileostomy sometimes find that when they skip meals, they are more likely to have gas and liquid stools.

When eating out the first few times, it's helpful to think through a number of situations, and then prepare for them. That will not only help you deal with any concerns that arise, it will also allow you to feel comfortable with yourself and to fully enjoy the food and conversation.

### Dealing with gas

If you have a fecal diversion you may have noticed that some foods give you gas, while most foods do not. You can simply follow your instincts when ordering your meal. When dining out you might also feel more comfortable using a pouch with a charcoal filter. The filter will allow the gas to exit the pouch without odor. The filter also prevents the pouch from over-expanding.

In addition, it's possible to buy over-the-counter products at the drug store to help reduce gas. Ask your pharmacist about options.

If you find that gas is causing your stoma to make noise, you can simply cross your arms and hold them gently over the pouch. This will help muffle the sound of the gas, reducing any noise.

## Food & beverage choices

If you have an ileostomy, you generally know which foods might not agree with you – for instance any foods that might have caused higher output. You can simply avoid those foods when dining out. A good rule of thumb is to eat slowly and chew the food thoroughly.

Keep in mind that carbonated beverages – soda, beer or carbonated water – will produce gas. If you have an ileostomy, you might choose to avoid carbonated drinks while you're dining out. You might also avoid drinking through a straw, since that can produce gas, too.

## Be prepared

Always take a kit with you in case you need to change your pouch. That's something you should do whenever you leave home – whether you're headed to dinner, to a doctor's appointment or to a baseball game. The kit should include the following items:

- *A pre-cut barrier and pouch (cut out the barrier beforehand if you do not use a pre-cut product)*
- *Paper towels, which you can moisten with water on the way into the stall*
- *Zip-top plastic bags – this will allow you to dispose of the old pouch in an odor- and leak-proof manner*
- *Pocket-size room deodorizer*
- *Sanitizing gel to clean your hands*
- *If living in a warm/hot climate do not leave your kit in the car as the adhesive will activate due to the heat and may not perform like usual*

**Preparing for odor** – If you may need to empty your pouch and you're concerned about odor, you can minimize pouch odor 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 before you go out to dinner.

The pocket-size room deodorizer in your kit could also help with any odor. This is especially helpful when using a restroom in a public place.

## How to handle a leak

If you feel a leak or detect an odor, excuse yourself and go to the restroom. Since it's always a good idea to have an extra pouch with you, you can change your pouch and (if needed) dry off your clothes.

Having a sense of humor will gracefully get you through a situation like this. In addition, the people you're dining with enjoy being with you, so even if they know what has happened, they will be understanding and supportive.

## Additional thoughts

Regardless of how long it has been since your ostomy surgery, it's always best to make healthy food choices – for optimal nutrition and to keep your weight in check. A balance of fruits, vegetables and protein will give you the nutrients your body needs to heal and to stay healthy.

But it's equally important to enjoy dining out with friends or family. To make sure you feel comfortable with what you might order, you could try foods one at a time, at home, to see if they have any effect on you.

Then make a reservation, get dressed and head out to your favorite restaurant. You'll be glad you did.

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