

# Ostomy Pouching Systems



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- Applying your pouching system

**H**ow do you decide which type of ostomy pouch is right for you? It usually depends on three factors: your lifestyle, the type of stoma you have, and the shape of your abdomen.

### Know your options

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You had one type of ostomy pouching system in the hospital, but that may not be your choice for the long term. Your abdomen and stoma will change in shape as swelling decreases following your surgery. As you heal you will be able to be more active, and your pouching needs may change.

It's a good idea to know what your options are. It's also helpful to talk to your Wound, Ostomy, Continence (WOC) Nurse, who can assess the look and feel of your abdomen. She or he can offer one-on-one advice based on your situation. But ultimately it's your choice, based on what works best for you.

### Pouching systems

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When choosing a pouching system, one of your first choices will be whether you want a one-piece or a two-piece pouch system.

In **one-piece systems**, the skin barrier and the pouch are a single unit. Since it is all one unit, there are fewer steps in putting it on. This makes one-piece systems easier for those with limited eyesight. They may also be easier to use for those with arthritis, since minimal hand strength and dexterity are needed. One-piece systems are very flexible, and they will lay flatter against the body, making it less noticeable under clothing.

In **two-piece systems**, the skin barrier and the pouch are separate pieces. There are two options for coupling, or connecting the two pieces together.

- **Mechanical coupling** – The pouch and barrier are connected similar to the way a lid snaps snugly onto a plastic container. Some hand strength and dexterity are needed to attach the pouch to the skin barrier. The skin barrier is easy to apply because you can see the stoma as you center it in the barrier. However the mechanical coupling barrier is somewhat rigid compared to one-piece or adhesive coupling options. With a two-piece system you can easily change your pouch size for activities such as swimming or intimate times.



- **Adhesive coupling** – The pouch and barrier are connected using an adhesive, similar to tape. Some dexterity – but little hand strength – is needed to attach the pouch to the skin barrier. The skin barrier is easy to apply because you can see the stoma as you center the barrier. The adhesive design allows this two-piece pouching system to be very flexible. With a two-piece system you can easily change your pouch size for activities such as swimming or intimate times. The adhesive coupling system lays flat against the body, which makes it less noticeable under your clothes.



## Barrier options

The barrier is the most important part of the pouching system because it protects your skin from stoma drainage and keeps your pouch in place. Be aware that your skin might take a few days or up to a few weeks to get used to the adhesive on your barrier.

### Helpful tips:

- Cut the barrier  $\frac{1}{8}$ " larger than the stoma.
- 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.

There are two types of barriers:

- **Standard wear barriers** are designed for more solid stool and are commonly used with colostomies. They absorb moisture quickly, so they are able to handle perspiration and still stay bonded to the skin. If they are exposed to moisture for long periods of time, however, these barriers may begin to erode or break down. Keep this in mind if you have a bout of diarrhea. In that case you may need to change the barrier more often.
- **Extended wear barriers** are designed to manage loose stools or liquid drainage from the stoma. They are commonly used with either an ileostomy or a urostomy. They resist absorbing moisture and maintain their shape longer than the standard wear barrier. If you have an ileostomy or urostomy, the extended wear barrier isn't likely to erode, so you should be able to wear it longer than a standard wear barrier.

### There are also different barrier shapes:

A skin barrier will either have a flat shape or a convex (curved) shape. Most people will use a flat barrier right after surgery. As the swelling from surgery decreases you may find you need a convex barrier.

**Convex** barriers are designed to gently push against the skin around your stoma. This helps prevent leakage by creating a secure seal. Your WOC Nurse may suggest that you wear a convex barrier if any of the following apply to you:

- Your stoma is flush with the skin or below skin level
- The skin around your stoma is not flat
- Your abdomen is very soft around your stoma
- If you often have leakage – even if your stoma protrudes (sticks out) from your skin

Make sure you discuss convex barriers with your WOC Nurse before trying them on your own.

## Ostomy accessories

There are a number of Brava® ostomy accessories that may allow you to get better results with your pouching system.



**Moldable Ring** – Used like a washer underneath the barrier to create a good seal right around the stoma. It can also be used to build up soft convexity around the stoma when using a flat barrier. Another option is to use it as caulking to fill in uneven gaps or creases in the skin. The ring can be molded and shaped into whatever shape or size is needed, and it is erosion resistant, allowing it to keep its shape longer than an ostomy paste.



**Elastic Barrier Strips** – Used to support the outer edge of the barrier, providing security by holding the barrier in place. Elastic Barrier Strips prevent the barrier from rolling up or peeling off due to clothing catching the edge of the barrier, or simply due to movement throughout the day.



**Ostomy Powder** – Commonly used on open skin or denuded skin. (Denuded skin has lost its outer skin layer.) The powder provides an absorptive layer of protection.



**Skin Barrier** – Leaves a plastic coating on the skin. When used with ostomy powder, sealant helps a barrier stick to moist, open skin. If sealant is used on dry skin, the plastic coating may interfere with the barrier adhering to the skin.



**Ostomy Belt** – Helps strengthen the seal between the barrier and skin and is often used with convex barriers. A belt can help with hard-to-manage situations: irregular contours of the abdomen, frequent leakage or a stoma that doesn't protrude from the skin.



**Pouch Deodorant** – A pouch lubricant and deodorizer in one. Powder-fresh liquid neutralizes odor and allows output to slide to the bottom of the pouch for easier emptying.



**Protective Paste** – Used to fill in uneven skin surfaces to create a flat pouching surface. Provides tight seal around the stoma and protects against stoma output, while minimizing risk of maceration.

## Applying your pouching system – the basics

- Gently wash the skin around your stoma with warm water and pat dry. Avoid soaps with scents or oils, which may irritate the skin and interfere with adhesion.
- Cut the barrier to the size of your stoma. Measure your stoma and use an opening that doesn't expose any skin between the barrier and the stoma. If your stoma is round, consider wearing a pre-cut barrier.
- Apply the skin barrier directly to clean, dry skin. This should give you the best adhesion.
- Remember that the adhesive on the skin barrier is pressure sensitive. The barrier takes both time and pressure to adhere to your skin. Apply gentle pressure to the barrier once it is on your skin to ensure complete contact. You will know that the barrier is bonded well when the edges no longer lift away from your skin. Applying gentle pressure may help ensure longer wear time.

## You have options

Even after you make your first selection, you are not locked into that choice. People often try out different pouching systems and supplies over a period of days, weeks or months. Trying out different options can help you know what works best for your lifestyle and your body type. There is no right or wrong choice, just the choice that works best for you.

If you have any questions regarding ostomy pouching systems, or simply want to try a product sample, please contact your Coloplast Consumer Care Advisor at [1-877-858-2656](tel:1-877-858-2656).

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