

# Urostomy

## Self-Care and Dietary Guidelines



### *In this article:*

- Emptying and changing your ostomy pouch
- Fluid intake
- Mucus and Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)
- Other helpful information

**A**fter urostomy 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.

These are general guidelines meant to help you with typical questions. You should follow the specific instructions provided by your healthcare team for you and the pouching system you are using.

### Helpful tips:

- **To avoid spilling, begin by holding the end of the pouch up.**
- **You can empty your pouch while either sitting or standing over the toilet.**
- **To prevent water from splashing upward, you can place a tissue into the toilet, or empty the pouch while flushing the toilet.**
- **Wipe the end of the pouch with a tissue to prevent odor.**
- **Always remember to securely close the end of the pouch.**



### Changing your ostomy pouch

Typically you should change your pouching system about twice a week, usually when your stoma is less active. But the frequency will depend on your body, your activity level, and the type of barrier you use. The best time of day to change your pouching system may be first thing in the morning—before you start drinking fluids.

If there is burning or itching under the barrier, change your pouching system immediately. Burning and itching could indicate leakage, and possible damage to the skin around the stoma.

#### Removing your pouch

Gather all supplies and place them within easy reach before you begin. Since urine drains continually from the stoma, you should have something to absorb the urine while the pouch is removed. It's easy to use a rolled up piece of tissue or toilet paper, applied lightly to the top of the stoma, to absorb urine.

To remove your barrier work slowly from the top to the bottom, pushing down on the skin as you lift off the barrier. Never rip or tear off the barrier too quickly, because that can irritate the skin. At times your skin may look pink or red after removing the adhesive, but this should fade in a few minutes.

#### Cleaning the stoma and surrounding skin

Clean the stoma and the skin around it with a moist washcloth or soft paper towel, then let it dry

completely. You don't need to use soap, cleansers, or moistened wipes as they may cause skin problems and keep the barrier from sticking. Remember to look at the skin around your stoma for redness or signs of irritation.

Always check your stoma as well. The natural color of your stoma should be red or pink. If your stoma looks very dark, purple or black, contact your doctor or Wound, Ostomy, Continence (WOC) Nurse. Every time you change your pouching system you may notice a little bleeding. This is normal and should stop quickly.

### 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.**

## Applying your pouch

In the first six to eight weeks after your urostomy surgery, the size of your stoma will gradually decrease. 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.

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.

### Night drainage systems

It's up to you, but many people prefer to use a night drainage system. It allows you to avoid getting up at night to empty the pouch.

If you use a night drainage system, clean it every day with warm water. Simply pour water through the tube and into the collection device. Empty and rinse the device, and then cover the end of the tubing with a cap or plastic wrap.

Sometimes urine crystals may form in your tubing. This is normal, resulting from the alkaline in the urine. Cleaning the tube with a vinegar solution will help dissolve these crystals. Once a week, instead of using plain water, use a solution of one part white vinegar to three parts water. Pour the solution through the tube into the collection device and let it sit for a few minutes. Empty and rinse the device, and then cover the end of the tubing with a cap or plastic wrap.

### 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
- 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 an urostomy. However, if your doctor has recommended a special diet, you should follow that advice.



## Diet

You generally should not have to change your diet after your urostomy surgery. Some foods such as asparagus, fish and spices may cause your urine to have an unusual odor and color, but this is nothing to be worried about.

## Fluids

Because of the nature of your surgery, your anatomy no longer has the natural defense to help prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs). Drinking adequate amounts of fluid will help to flush your urinary tract or bacteria and help prevent UTIs. Unless your doctor says otherwise, drink 10-12 glasses of fluid every day.

You might notice some mucus shreds in urine; these are normal. Drinking more fluids will help to minimize mucus shreds. Note also that if your urine is dark you may be dehydrated, so you should increase your fluid intake.

### Types of fluids

It's best to drink mostly water or fruit juice. In moderation, tea and coffee are fine too. But be aware that more than a couple cups of any caffeinated drink can cause dehydration. Most of your 10 to 12 glasses of liquid each day should be water or fruit juice.

Pure cranberry juice is also good to drink because it can help increase acidity in your urine which may prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs). If you don't like the taste of cranberry juice, you might take cranberry pills with water. However, if you are on blood-thinning medication, **always** check with your nurse or doctor before adding cranberry juice to your diet. Avoid cranberry juice if you're on a type of blood thinner called warfarin (brand name Coumadin®).

As for alcohol, talk with your doctor to determine whether you're still able to have a drink – she/he can determine whether alcohol might interfere with any medication you are taking.

### Mucus and urinary tract infections (UTIs)

It's normal for everyone to have some mucus shreds in their urine. Drinking more fluids helps reduce mucus in the urine. However, if the amount of mucus shreds increases, and/or if your urine changes color and has a strong odor, it may signal that you have a urinary tract infection (UTI).

A urostomy puts you at higher risk for developing a UTI. To avoid UTIs, you should drink 10 to 12 glasses of water or other fluids a day (unless your doctor instructs otherwise). In addition, you should empty your pouch regularly.

## Additional thoughts

Feeling comfortable with your body is important, especially after this type of surgery. It's equally important to enjoy good food as a part of a full life. We're hoping these guidelines are helpful to you.

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 questions, usage and availability at **1-877-858-2656**.

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