

# Life After Colostomy





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This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to substitute for professional Medical advice and should not be interpreted to contain treatment recommendations. You should rely on the healthcare professional who knows your individual history for personal medical advice and diagnosis.

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.

**IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911.**

## Introduction

Coloplast started over 60 years ago when nurse Elise Sorensen came up with a simple idea with far-reaching consequences: the world's first disposable ostomy bag with an adhesive ring. Before disposable ostomy bags, people used metal or glass capsules, fabric belts or rubber bags. Elise's idea would give her sister, who had an ostomy, and thousands like her around the world the chance to live a normal life again.

Since then, Coloplast has expanded to include wound, skin, continence and interventional urology divisions. While many changes have occurred over the years, we continue to conduct business in the same spirit as Elise and our founders: we listen, we learn and we respond. Our mission is to make life easier for people with intimate healthcare needs. This booklet was designed to do so by answering some of the most frequently asked questions you may have regarding your ostomy care.

Adjusting to life after ostomy surgery can be challenging. At Coloplast, we look forward to being a valuable resource for you, and will provide you with the support and educational materials to help along the way.

By now you have had a chance to meet with your surgeon and Wound, Ostomy, Continence (WOC) Nurse. Your WOC Nurse has received special education and training in all aspects of ostomy care, and will help you and your family learn about living with a colostomy.

This booklet is a great starting point to help you through your surgery and help maintain your current lifestyle. These are general guidelines meant to help you with typical questions. This information is not meant to be a substitute for medical care, so always consult your physician or appropriate healthcare provider.

Sincerely,

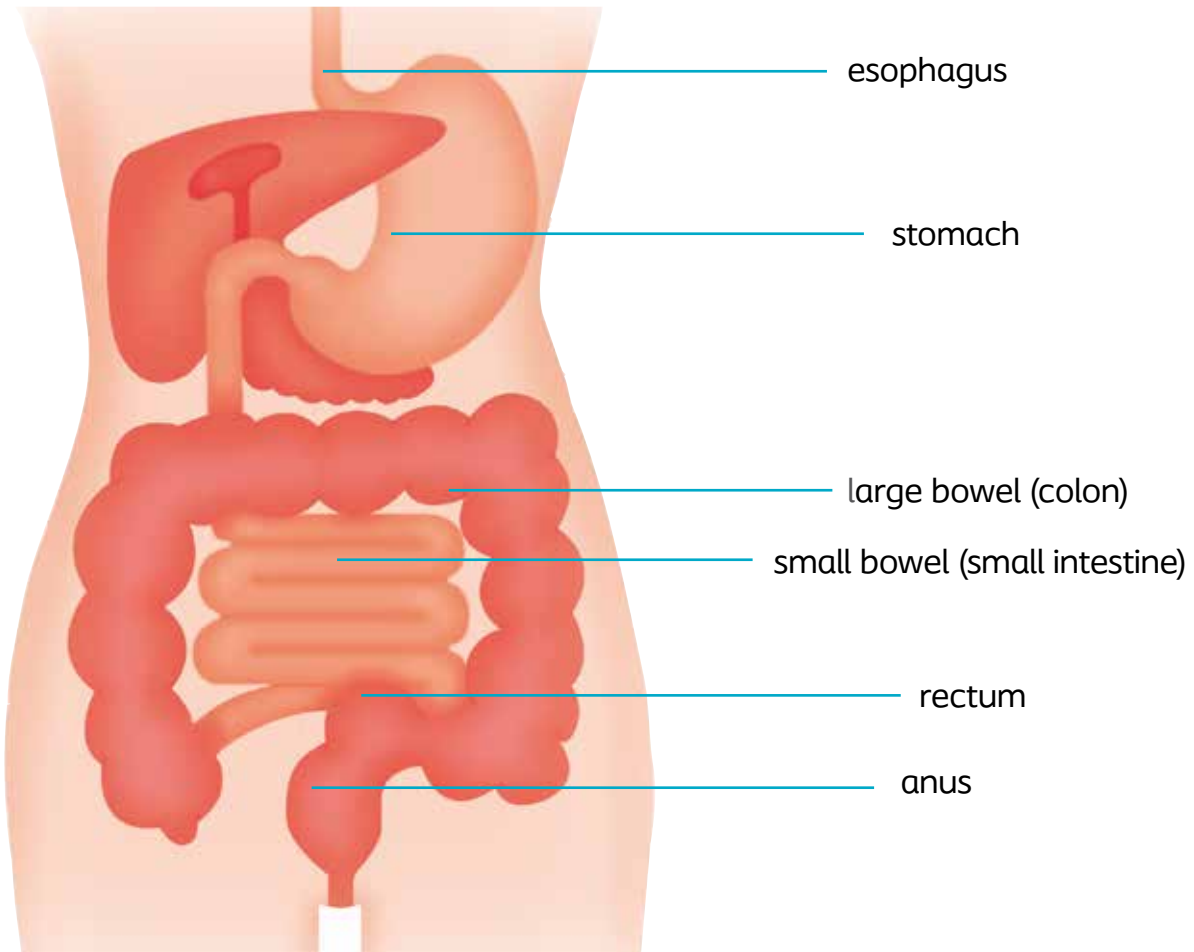
Coloplast Corp.

## Normal digestive function

Looking at what happens to the food you eat will help you understand what is involved in your operation.

When food is swallowed, it passes through a long narrow tube (esophagus) into the stomach. In the stomach, digestive juices help break down the food before it is passed to the

small bowel. The small bowel is where the nutrients you need from the food are absorbed. Hours later, your "food" is passed into the large bowel (or colon), where water is absorbed and stool changes from liquid to solid, and is stored. Stool is then pushed through the colon into the rectum, and leaves the body through the anus.



## What is a colostomy?

During colostomy surgery, the end or a portion of the colon is brought through an opening on the surface of the abdomen (belly). The part of the bowel you see on your abdomen is called the **stoma**. The stoma may be located on the right side (ascending colostomy), center (transverse colostomy), or left side (descending or sigmoid colostomy) of your abdomen. The location will depend on the reason for your colostomy. The stoma is where the stool will now pass from your body. The stoma may or may not stick out from your abdomen.

A healthy stoma is moist and red or pink in color. There are no nerve endings in the stoma, so it will not hurt when touched. It is normal for the stoma to be large and swollen after surgery, however it should shrink to a smaller size within five to six weeks. Your stoma may move slightly, which is a normal process that pushes stool through the colon.

Just like your gums sometimes bleed when you brush your teeth, your stoma may also bleed slightly. However, if your stool is bloody, or you have constant bleeding, you should contact your doctor. Since the colostomy has no sphincter muscles, you will not be able to control your bowel movement (when stool comes out). You will need to wear a pouch to collect the stool.



**Sigmoid End Colostomy**  
located within the sigmoid colon.

The location of your colostomy will influence the consistency of your output.

- If located in the **transverse colon**, the stool consistency is typically pasty.
- If located in the **sigmoid colon**, the stool will be similar to a usual bowel movement.

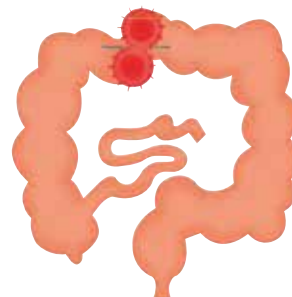
The nature and frequency of the output may be affected by food and fluid intake, as well as some medications and treatments prescribed by your doctor.

**Temporary colostomy** – the doctor can reconnect the colon and close the stoma.

**Permanent colostomy** – the colon cannot be reconnected and closed.

Some permanent ostomy surgeries require the removal of the colon and rectum, yet there may still be a feeling of the need to have a bowel movement. This is normal and should ease with time. If you still have your rectum, mucus may build up and pass from the rectum the same way as a bowel movement. Mucus is produced to help the stool pass through (even if no stool is being passed).

Your surgeon or WOC Nurse can explain your type of surgery.



**Transverse Loop Colostomy**  
located within the transverse colon.

## After the operation

When you wake up from surgery you will be wearing your first ostomy pouch. The pouch may be clear so the doctors and nurses can check on your new stoma.

You will have an intravenous line (IV) dripping fluid into your veins. You may also have a tube that goes through your nose and into your stomach, to keep your stomach empty. Drain tubes around the incision site are also common.

Your stoma will begin to function three to seven days after surgery. The first output will be mostly gas or liquid stool. The stool will

thicken and become more solid as you begin to eat more foods. There may be a lot of gas from your stoma at first, however, this should decrease over time.

During the first few days, you will only be given fluids to drink. Food will slowly be added to your diet as your bowel function returns to normal.

Colostomy surgery is a major operation, so it is normal to feel weak for a while. You may experience pain from the surgery, and medication can be prescribed by the doctor to help you feel more comfortable.

## Types of pouching systems

### 1-piece



Barrier and pouch combined

### 2-piece mechanical coupling



Barrier and pouch are separate (two plastic pieces snap together)

### 2-piece adhesive coupling



Barrier and pouch are separate (flexible coupling sticks together)

## Additional options



Drainable pouch with integrated closure



Drainable pouch with clamp closure



Closed pouch for a low-profile and greater convenience



Stoma caps



## What type of pouch should I choose?

Ostomy pouches are available in many different styles. Your WOC Nurse will help you choose the one that suits you best. You may wish to replace the clear pouch (used after your surgery) with one that is not see-through, such as an opaque pouch.

Pouches are odor-proof, made of clear or neutral-colored plastic with cloth backing, and are held to the skin by an adhesive (sticky) barrier. They are lightweight and may not be seen under clothing. Some pouches come with a filter that deodorizes the gas as it passes through the pouch.

The two main types of pouches are:

- one-piece system
- two-piece system

A **one-piece system** refers to a system where the pouch and barrier come together as a single unit. A **two-piece system** has a separate pouch and barrier. These two pieces attach together. With a two-piece system you have the option of changing the pouch without changing the

barrier. You are also able to remove the pouch to empty and clean it.

Some people with colostomies choose to irrigate their ostomy to regulate their bowel movements. This is similar to giving yourself an enema through your colostomy. Your WOC Nurse will advise you as to whether irrigation is an option.

Drainable and closed pouches are also available. A drainable pouch allows you to empty your stool periodically throughout the day. You may wish to change to a closed pouch, which can be thrown away as needed.

Both systems are designed to be gentle on your skin, light weight, leak-proof and odor-proof, providing a comfortable and discreet pouching system.

Your WOC Nurse can assist you in choosing the right system, and answer questions about taking care of your stoma. You can be sure your questions and concerns have been raised before.

## Emptying the pouch

You should empty your pouch when it is about one-third to one-half full (or when needed or desired). A full pouch can become heavy and break loose from the skin. Also, emptying is more difficult if the pouch is full.

Emptying the pouch can be easy if you follow these steps:

- Sit far back on the toilet and place the end of the pouch between your legs, or stand and lean over the toilet when emptying the pouch.
- Place tissue into the toilet, or empty while flushing, to prevent water from splashing on you.
- Hold the end of the pouch up before taking off the clamp, or opening the VELCRO® Brand hook tabs.

- Drain the contents. If the stool is too thick, you can add tap water into the pouch to help loosen the stool.
- Wipe the end of the pouch with a tissue. Be sure to get all the stool off the end of the pouch so you won't have odor. Place the clamp onto the pouch, or attach the VELCRO® Brand hook tabs onto the soft plate.
- It is not necessary to rinse the pouch after emptying. Once the pouch is closed, it is odor-proof again.



*Refer to the instructions for use for your particular pouching system*



## Learning to care for your stoma

Your WOC Nurse will teach you how to care for your stoma and change your pouching system. It is important to take good care of the skin around your stoma (peristomal skin). If the barrier does not fit securely around the stoma, or if stool leaks beneath the barrier, the skin can become red and sore. The peristomal skin may also become red and sore if the pouch is removed too roughly, changed too often, or if harsh cleansers are used on the skin.





## Changing the pouching system

The length of time a pouch is worn depends on your body, activity level, stool output, and type of pouch used. Typically you should change your pouching system about twice a week, usually when your stoma is active less. Plan a regular time to change the pouch; do not wait for it to leak. If you ever feel burning or itching under the pouch or barrier, you should change the pouching system and check your skin.

During the first four to six weeks after surgery, you will need to remeasure your stoma once a week (since the stoma should decrease in size after the operation). Moving forward, measure your stoma at least once a month to make sure you have a secure fit – which prevents stool from irritating your skin.

The best time to change your pouch is when the colostomy is not active and draining. Therefore, the morning may be a good time (before eating or drinking) since the stoma is not as active. If the morning is not a good time for you to change the pouch, wait at least two hours after a meal. However, if the pouch is leaking, it should be changed as soon as possible.

Follow these steps when changing your pouching system:

*Please refer to product labeling for complete product instructions for use.*

### 1. Make sure all supplies are within reach:

- soft paper towels or washcloth
- measuring guide
- scissors
- warm water
- garbage bag
- marking pen
- new pouch/barrier
- pouch deodorant (if recommended) by your WOC nurse

2. Gently remove the old barrier, working slowly from top to bottom. Push down on the skin as you lift off the barrier. Never rip or tear off the barrier, since the skin could become red or sore. You can sit or stand while changing your pouch. If you wear a drainable pouch, remove the pouch clamp or release the VELCRO® Brand dots to drain the contents into the toilet, before taking off the

## Changing the pouching system (cont.)

pouch. Then place the pouch into the garbage. Do not flush the pouch in the toilet since this could cause a blocked toilet.

3. **Wash and rinse the stoma and the skin around it. Then dry thoroughly.** Some soaps, lotions, and creams tend to leave a film that may cause the skin to become red and sore, or the barrier may not adhere as well. Use a mild soap without glycerins, oils, or deodorants. Do not be alarmed if you see some bleeding on the stoma – this is normal. (It's similar to how your gums bleed when brushing or flossing your teeth.)
4. **Check the skin for any redness or sore spots.** If you see a rash or have skin problems, call your WOC Nurse or healthcare provider.
5. **Measure the stoma.** Cut the barrier to ensure the skin next to the stoma is covered.
6. **Apply the new barrier and pouch.** Make sure the appliance is secure around the stoma. Try to avoid wrinkles. If your stoma becomes active during the pouch change, wipe the stool with a tissue. Be sure your skin is clean and dry before putting on the

barrier and pouch. (Tip: Warm the barrier between your hands for one to two minutes, causing the barrier to warm up to your skin. This results in better wear time.)

7. **Secure pouch closure,** making sure clamp is securely fastened or outlet is sealed by attaching the VELCRO® Brand hook tabs onto the soft plate.

### Key Points

- Plan on changing your pouch in the morning, before your ostomy becomes active.
- You may shower with your pouching system on or off.
- If you spend time in a hot tub or sauna, the heat may loosen the barrier. Always check your barrier to make sure you have a good seal.
- Make sure skin is clean and thoroughly dry before applying the pouching system.
- Warm the barrier between your hands before placing on your skin.
- Apply gentle pressure to the barrier after application.



## Going home

Here is some helpful advice for when you return home:

### Obtaining supplies

Upon leaving the hospital, your WOC Nurse will provide you with information on how and where to get your supplies. Your doctor will write a prescription for your ostomy product supplier, as well as a list of the supplies you will need.

Be careful not to store your pouches in direct sunlight or near heat. This may cause the barrier that attaches the pouching system to your skin to break down. If stored in cool temperatures, let the barrier return to room temperature before using.

### Diet

Unless your doctor has prescribed a special diet, you should not have to change your diet. Over time you will become aware of foods that produce more gas than others. Examples of some foods that can cause gas are:

- beer
- dried beans
- broccoli
- cabbage
- cucumbers
- carbonated beverages

Products can be bought at the drug store or grocery store to reduce gas. Always check with your physician before taking medications. Some ways to decrease gas are by:

- eating slowly
- not talking with food in your mouth
- not drinking through straws
- not chewing gum

### Odor

Some foods can cause more odors in your stool. They may include:

- fish
- cheese
- eggs
- beans
- cabbage family  
(i.e. onions, broccoli, brussel sprouts)

Experiment to see how they affect you. Liquid deodorizers, such as Brava® Lubricating Deodorant, can be put in your pouch; taking certain oral medications can also help prevent odor. Your WOC Nurse can advise you of specific products available.



## Going home (cont.)

### Constipation/Diarrhea

You may become constipated or have diarrhea, just as you did before surgery. If you become constipated, try eating more fiber (vegetables, fruits, and brans) and drinking more water. Check with your doctor to see if a mild laxative is appropriate for your condition. If constipation becomes a problem, talk to your doctor or WOC Nurse.

If you are experiencing diarrhea, treat it the same as before you had surgery, and remember to drink plenty of fluids – you might try a “sports” drink to replace fluids and electrolytes. If your diarrhea persists call your doctor or WOC nurse.

### Bathing and showering

You may choose to bathe or shower with your pouch on or off. If you shower with your pouch off, choose a soap that is oil- and residue-free. These types of soaps will not interfere with the adhesion of the barrier.

### Exercise and sports

Exercise is good for everyone, including people with a colostomy. Check with your doctor before exercising or playing contact sports. Special small pouches can be used when swimming and playing sports, if desired.

### Intimacy

You should speak with your surgeon regarding any effects your surgery may have on sexual function. Your ostomy does not limit or prohibit sexual activity. Intimacy can play an important role as

you take steps to resume the life you had before surgery. Note: there are special products and accessory choices available for intimate moments.

### Travel

Travel should not be restricted due to your colostomy. Remember to pack all of your supplies for the journey, and make sure you have more than enough supplies for the duration of your trip. Keep your supplies where you can easily get to them. If you are flying, take supplies in a “carry-on” bag, in case you become separated from your checked luggage.

### Supply checklist

- pouches
- barriers - if using a two-piece system
- soft paper towels
- wipes, strip paste, powder or other accessories
- scissors (if using a cut-to-fit system)
- stoma guide
- plastic bag (to discard pouch, if necessary)



## Continuing care

After surgery, it's important that you begin enjoying life as quickly as possible. Your doctor or WOC Nurse is available to help with any problems or questions. Organizations are also in place to provide information and support for you and your family. Ask your WOC Nurse for information about local groups and chapters.

### To be completed by WOC Nurse

Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Surgeon: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Stoma: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Surgery: \_\_\_\_\_ Stoma Size: \_\_\_\_\_

### Coloplast ostomy products given upon discharge:

Product Code	Description

This information should be used when obtaining product from your ostomy supplier; you may need a prescription at your pharmacy:

Ostomy product supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Coloplast Consumer Care Advisor 1-877-858-2656

#### Notes:

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## Resources

The United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA) is a nationwide organization whose aim is to give information, advice, and support to anyone who has, or is about to have an intestinal or urinary diversion and their caretakers. Members of the UOAA can visit you at home and in the hospital. Numerous groups operate throughout the country, where meetings are held to share news and views with other members. A quarterly magazine is also available to members. Use the contact information below to find the support group most suitable for you:

### United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc. (UOAA)

P.O. Box 525  
Kennebunk, ME 04043-0525  
1-800-826-0826  
[www.ostomy.org](http://www.ostomy.org)

### Other Resources

#### Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, Inc. (CCFA)

733 Third Avenue, Suite 510  
New York, NY 10017  
1-800-932-2423  
[www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org)

#### Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN)

1120 Route 73, Suite 200  
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054  
1-888-224-WOCN (9626)  
[www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org)

#### Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy (CAET)

66 Leapolds Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
CANADA  
1-888-739-5072  
[www.caet.ca](http://www.caet.ca)

### Coloplast® Care Program

Coloplast® Care is designed to support you as you get back to living your life after ostomy surgery. It may take some time to become comfortable living with a stoma, but through the Coloplast Care program, we will provide support for you throughout the process with a personal Coloplast Consumer Care Advisor, routine self-assessments to help you stay on track, and with a wealth of education.

For further assistance, call 1-877-858-2656 or visit [www.coloplast.us](http://www.coloplast.us).



Coloplast develops products and services that make life easier for people with very personal and private medical conditions. Working closely with the people who use our products, we create solutions that are sensitive to their special needs. We call this intimate healthcare.

Our business includes ostomy care, continence care, wound and skin care and urology care. We operate globally and employ more than 12,000 employees.

Ostomy Care / Continence Care / Wound & Skin Care / Interventional Urology



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