

# Leaving hospital with a stoma

## Colorectal Department



**Patient information leaflet**

## What is this leaflet all about?

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This booklet contains information that will be helpful to you following your discharge from hospital.

Much of the information contained within this booklet will be familiar to you from conversations with your stoma nurse and the nurses on the ward. This booklet will serve as a reminder of these conversations.

If you have a problem that is not answered in the booklet, please get in touch with us and we will try to help you:

**Telephone:** 01483 571122 **ext** 2558 or **bleep** 0911

## What stoma equipment am I using?

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You are currently using:

Item	Make	Description	Order number	Pack size	Boxes per month
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

We have placed an order on your behalf with a Home Delivery Service.

**Your supplies are due to be delivered on:**

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Your GP has been sent a copy of the above information for your prescription.

Once you have your prescription from your GP please forward your prescription either to the Home Delivery Service as soon as possible or your local chemist.

**The next month's supply should be requested when you have between 2-3 weeks of supplies left of your first order, as they need to receive your prescription from your GP before they can dispatch your requested items.**

If you are using the Home Delivery Service the repeat prescription should be sent to them using their FREEPOST envelope.

Otherwise, take your repeat prescription to your local chemist and they will order the supplies for you.

## **When will I be discharged from hospital?**

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You will not be discharged from hospital until you feel able to empty and change your stoma bag yourself. Once you are home you will be able to practice and become more confident.

The stoma nurse will telephone you within 3 days of discharge from hospital to check that you are managing. Please expect to receive a telephone call on:

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**You will be visited by a stoma nurse within a week of discharge if you live within our catchment area. After this visit you will be seen in our stoma clinic. Clinics are held on Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings.**

## **What happens when I attend stoma clinic?**

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The stoma nurse will examine the stoma and check it is healthy and that the surrounding skin is in good condition and the template size is correct. This is also a good opportunity to discuss any worries you may have. When you attend the stoma clinic please ensure you bring spare stoma equipment with you.

## **How do I order more stoma equipment?**

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When you leave hospital your stoma nurse will give you enough stoma equipment to last until your first order arrives from the Home Delivery Service (or from your local chemist if preferred).

**The next month's supply should be requested when you have between 2-3 weeks of supplies left of your first order, as they need to receive your prescription from your GP before they can dispatch your requested items.**

Otherwise, take your repeat prescription to your local chemist and they will order the supplies for you.

## Will I have to pay for prescriptions?

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If you are under retirement age and normally pay for your prescriptions, it will be necessary to include the usual payment with your prescription.

However, if your stoma is permanent, you will be entitled to a prescription exemption payment certificate.

## How do I store and dispose of stoma bags?

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Keep your stoma bags in a cool room or cupboard. Heat can make the adhesive very soft and sticky.

To dispose of a used bag first empty the contents into the toilet.

Then put the used bag in one of the supplied scented disposal sacks (or wrap it in newspaper) and put it in the dustbin with the rest of your rubbish.

## How soon can I start to exercise?

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After surgery it is important that you keep active.

Aim to do a little walking each day and increase the amount daily so you are back to your normal activities 4-6 weeks after your operation.

Avoid lifting heavy objects for the first 4-6 weeks as this would strain the muscles supporting your stoma and might cause a hernia.

## What about my diet?

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- After stoma surgery it may take some time for your bowels to settle down.
- It is not unusual to have episodes of watery stools or constipation.
- At first your stoma will work best if you have a simple diet of easily digested foods.

## Here are some tips to help establish a satisfactory stoma output

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- You should eat a well balanced diet.
- Chew your food well.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day.
- Eat small quantities at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- Avoid leaving long gaps between meals.
- There are very few foods that need to be avoided once your stoma has settled. Most people are able to eat a normal diet including fruit and vegetables.
- If a food upsets you do not eat it again for a couple of weeks and then try it again.
- Your stoma nurse can advise you if you are having difficulty with your diet.

## Are there any problems I might experience?

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**Bleeding from the stoma:** it is common for stomas to bleed when they are cleaned particularly in the first few weeks. The bleeding usually stops very quickly. *However if you notice blood coming from within the stoma please let your doctor know.*

**Stoma bag leaking or coming unstuck:** this may occur if your skin is not dry when the bag is applied or you may have an uneven skin surface around your stoma. *Contact your stoma nurse for advice as soon as possible.* It is important to sort this problem out quickly so that your skin does not become sore.

**Sore skin:** this is usually due to leakage of stool onto the skin and may be caused by a badly fitting bag. Check that the template size is not too big – you should only be able to see a couple of millimetres of skin around your stoma. *Contact your stoma nurse if you would like her to check your template size.*

**Alternative stoma bags:** there are many different types of stoma bag on the market. Your stoma nurse will be able to show some to you and advise which would be suitable.

**Smell:** there should be no smell from a stoma bag when it is in place. Odours occur if there is leakage on to the skin or clothes. Odour also occurs when the bag is emptied or changed. Your stoma nurse can advise you on deodorant sprays, drops or capsules which can help.

**Watery stools:** it is easy to become dehydrated when you have an ileostomy and therefore ***it is very important to drink plenty of fluids*** particularly in hot weather or when participating in sport. It is helpful to add extra salt to your diet as this helps your bowel absorb fluid better. Speak to your stoma nurse if you have this problem and they will be able to recommend some medication to control this problem.

**Pancaking:** this happens when stool does not drop down into the bag and causes the adhesive to lift. It is a problem experienced by many people with colostomies. ***Make sure you are drinking enough.*** It helps to put a teaspoon of baby oil into the bag to keep the sides of the bag apart. Another trick is to cover the filter with one of the sticky patches enclosed in the box. Some stoma bags are better at coping with this problem than others, so a change of bag type might help.

**Bulging around the stoma (hernia):** sometimes due to a weakness in the abdominal muscles behind the stoma a bulge develops around the stoma. This can be uncomfortable and unsightly and may make it difficult to fit the stoma bag. Contact your stoma nurse and they can advise you about support garments. Occasionally surgery to repair a large hernia is suggested.

**Stoma noises:** an embarrassing problem! Wind tends to be most troublesome in the early days until the bowel settles down. Some foods cause more of a problem and you may want to exclude these. ***Eating small frequent meals and not leaving long gaps between meals helps.*** Chew food well and take time with your meals. ***Try to drink between meals rather than with meals and avoid fizzy drinks.***

**Constipation:** people with a stoma can still experience constipation. An ileostomy should work every day but a colostomy can remain inactive for a few days and do you no harm. If your stoma stops producing stools and you experience abdominal cramping pains or vomiting, contact your GP or stoma nurse for advice.

## Getting help with problems

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Like any new skill, learning to cope with a stoma takes time and practice. It is very common to have a few problems in the early days.

Your stoma nurse is available to give you advice and practical and emotional support.

Most problems are easily solved, either by a telephone call or by a visit to the stoma clinic.

You will be offered regular appointments at this clinic, but if a problem occurs between clinic visits it is not necessary to wait until your next appointment.

The stoma nurse can be contacted between **08.00–16.00**  
Monday–Friday on **01483 571122** ext **2558** or bleep **0911**.

Please leave a message if we are not available and we will call you back as soon as possible.

For an urgent problem, it is usually possible to see you on the same day.

Outside office hours, or in an emergency, please contact your GP.

It is also possible to get advice from the nursing staff on your ward at the Royal Surrey County Hospital. Ring the hospital switchboard on **01483 571122** and ask to be put through to the ward.

You may also find it very useful to contact one of the voluntary organisations listed below.



## Reference sources and voluntary organisations

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- **Colostomy Association**  
Telephone: 0800 587 6744  
Website: [www.colostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.colostomyassociation.org.uk)
- **Ileostomy & Internal Pouch Support Group**  
Telephone: 0800 018 4724  
Website: [www.iasupport.org](http://www.iasupport.org)
- **National Association for Colitis & Crohns (NACC)**  
Telephone: 0845 130 3344  
Website: [www.nacc.org.uk](http://www.nacc.org.uk)
- **Cancer Backup**  
Telephone: 0800 181199  
Website: [www.cancerbackup.org.uk](http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk)
- **Macmillan Cancer Support**  
Telephone: 0808 808 0000  
Website: [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)





## Contact details

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**Your local Stoma Nurse is:**

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Stoma Nurse at Royal Surrey County Hospital

**Telephone:** 01483 571122 ext 2558 or **bleep** 0911

**Monday–Friday, 08.00–16.00**

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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