

Patient Information Leaflet



Changing a Stoma Bag - Guidelines

Changing a Stoma Bag - Guidelines

Ileostomy & Urostomy

It is recommended that your ileostomy or urostomy appliance should be changed every second day in the immediate post-operative period (about eight weeks). After this you can assess how often the appliance needs to be changed depending on the condition of your skin. If you leave the appliance for three days and your skin condition is good then you can change the appliance every third or fourth day. If your skin deteriorates then you will need to change your appliance more frequently i.e. every second day. It is not recommended to leave your appliance on for longer than four to five days.

Colostomy

You will need to change your appliance once or twice a day depending on your output. If your bowels opened once a day prior to your surgery then you may find when you have recovered from your surgery that your stoma will work once a day as well. Some patients will change their appliance twice a day i.e. morning and evening. If you use a two-piece system, the base plate can be changed less often than the bag.

Guidelines for Appliance Change

1. Arrange all necessary equipment. This will include:
 - New appliance
 - Wipes/kitchen roll/toilet paper
 - Warm tap water in a bowl/sink
 - Rubbish bag
 - Scissors
 - Measuring guide
 - Pen
2. Empty the appliance (only if it is a drainable appliance).
3. Position yourself where you can see what you are doing.
4. Carefully remove the old appliance and place in the rubbish bag.
5. Use a dry wipe to remove any excess faecal material on your skin.
6. Using the wipes and the warm water, thoroughly but gently clean the skin around the stoma. Spots of blood may appear on the tissue as your stoma may bleed when touched. This is normal as your stoma has numerous blood vessels in it. However a lot of bleeding is not normal and you should contact your local stoma care nurse.

7. Dry the surrounding skin. This is very important as otherwise the new appliance will not adhere to wet skin.
8. Measure the stoma size using the measuring guide.
9. Cut the appliance to the size and shape required (approximately 2mm bigger than the stoma size).
10. Remove the backing from the appliance.
11. Place the new appliance onto your abdomen covering the stoma.
12. Run your fingers to smooth the edges around the stoma first, and then work to the outer edges. Run fingers round the entire flange to make sure the appliance is sealed.
13. Place your hand over the appliance for 30 seconds to help adhesion.
14. Throw the rubbish away.
15. Wash your hands.

Appliances

There are many different types of appliances available for you to use. It is your choice what appliance you will use. Sometimes the type of stoma, the output, where the stoma is situated and how you can manage the appliance may limit your choice. Your stoma care nurse will assist you in your choice of appliance.

Appliances are available in one piece and two-piece systems. Your stoma care nurse will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each system in greater depth when you are choosing an appliance.

Ileostomy

As the output from an ileostomy will always be loose, the appliance you use must have a fastening (either velcro or plastic) on the end to close it. This will allow you to empty the appliance as it fills up during the day, without having to remove the whole appliance.

Colostomy

Immediately after your surgery the output from your stoma will be liquid and you will use an appliance with a velcro fastening on the end. As you recover from surgery your output will become formed and it will be difficult to empty the faeces via the opening. At this stage the stoma care nurse will advise you to use a closed appliance (without a fastening). You will usually have to change the appliance one

or two times a day depending on the output. Probably in the morning and the evening.

Urostomy

As your kidneys will always be producing urine your stoma bag will need to be emptied every two to three hours. The appliance you use will have a tap on the end for you to empty it. At night you can attach a larger night drainage bag, which holds a larger volume of urine. This will allow you to sleep through the night without emptying the appliance.

Supplies

There are two options to receive ongoing stoma supplies in the community.

Option 1 - Supplies delivered to your home by a home delivery company (HDC)

You will be given two weeks' worth of supplies when you go home. The stoma care nurse will ring the HDC and organise a delivery to be sent to your house within the next few days. You will need to go to your GP and get a prescription and place it in the pre paid envelope that the stoma care nurse has given you and send it to the HDC. When you have two weeks of supplies left, you will need another prescription from your GP, place it in the pre paid envelope and send to the HDC. Continue to do this as long as you have a stoma.

In certain situations it may be possible for the HDC to write directly to your GP requesting the prescription. Please ask your stoma care nurse if this is possible and this will be arranged for you. When you have about two weeks left of supplies ring the HDC, give your details and order more supplies. The HDC will then contact your GP to get the prescription. Continue to do this as long as you have a stoma.

Option 2 - You pick your supplies up from your chemist

You will be given two weeks of supplies to go home with. You will need to get a prescription from your GP and give it to your chemist so they can order the supplies. This may take several days. You then pick up your supplies from the chemist. When you have about two weeks' worth of supplies left you will need to get another prescription from your GP to give to the chemist. Continue to do this for as long as you have a stoma.

Pre-cut appliances

When your stoma has stopped shrinking and changing shape, after about four to six weeks, then you can order your appliances already cut from the home delivery company. Home delivery companies offer a service where they will cut the appliance for you. If you think that your stoma has stopped shrinking then contact your home delivery company and give them the final measurement. All your appliances will now be cut to this measurement. If you are not sure if your stoma has stopped shrinking or your stoma is an unusual shape then contact your stoma care nurse who can make a template for you. You can send this to the home delivery company and they will use this template to cut the flange to the shape of your stoma.

Prescription costs

Your stoma appliance prescriptions will be free only if you:

- Are aged over 60
- Are aged 16, 17 or 18 in full time education
- Have a certain medical condition (i.e. Hypoparathyroidism, Diabetes a permanent stoma or fistula)
- You or your partner receiving income support, income based job seekers allowance, pension guarantee credit or have an NHS tax credit exemption certificate.

If you do not fall into one of these groups then you will be required to pay a cost on each product on your prescription.

You will be required to pay for your prescriptions if you:

- Have a temporary stoma
- Are under 60 years of age

Prescription Pre-payment (PPCs) help people who require large quantities, or regular prescriptions to reduce the cost when they are not entitled to free prescriptions on other grounds. PPCs are available for four months or a year. A PPC will save you money if you regularly need more than one prescription per month.

You can apply for a PPC:

- On the Internet at www.ppa.nhs.uk
- Posting form FP95 available from your local pharmacy
- From a pharmacy registered to sell PPCs
- By telephone 0845 850 0030 (calls charged at local rate).

Skin Care

The skin is the largest organ in the body. It plays an important role in protecting the underlying internal structures of the body. Intact healthy skin is essential for the normal use of a stoma appliance.

Measuring your stoma

Immediately after surgery it is important that you measure the stoma at least once a week for the first eight weeks after surgery. Your stoma care nurse will give you a measuring guide and demonstrate its use before you are discharged from hospital. As most stomas are usually swollen after surgery it will decrease in size and change shape. Measuring the stoma on a weekly basis allows you to cut the appliance to the correct size and therefore protect the skin from the corrosive faeces or urine that is coming from the stoma.

Excoriated skin

If you notice a red ring of skin round your stoma, then it is likely that your stoma has shrunk and you may be cutting the flange too big. Clean your skin using warm tap water. Thoroughly dry the area. Re-measure your stoma using a measuring guide and cut the flange to the correct size. The flange is designed to cover red excoriated skin and will help this skin to heal. When you next remove the appliance you should notice an improvement in the condition of the skin.

If you feel the skin is not improving or deteriorating, are unsure of measuring your stoma or have any other concerns then contact your stoma care nurse who will be able to advise you on what to do.

In some instances an area of red skin may not be simple to resolve. There may be different causes such as a retracted stoma, weight loss or gain or in very rare cases an allergy. If you suspect any of these then contact your stoma care nurse.

If you require any advice, please contact your stoma care nurse.

Contact details:

St Mark's Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 3UJ

Stoma care dept – 020 8235 4110

Frederick Salmon Ward South - 020 8235 4022

Frederick Salmon Ward North – 020 8235 4191

Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Wing - 020 8869 3399

Call centre – 020 8235 4061

www.stmarkshospital.org.uk

Author: St Mark's Hospital nursing team
Review date: May 2011