

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE

7301 RED ARROW HWY.

STEVENSVILLE, MI 49127



**OSTOMY
NEWSLETTER**

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2014



Depression and the New Ostomate

From North Central Oklahoma Ostomy Outlook January 2008; by Mark Shaffer, from Northern Virginia The Pouch; via Chippewa Valley (WI) Rosebud Review

At a recent support group meeting, a subject came up that I found intriguing. One of the participants in the rap session stated that he found himself depressed and withdrawn even though it had been a year since his surgery. He wondered how long he could expect that feeling to last and, I think, whether it would go on for the rest of his life.

Some ostomates adjust almost immediately. These folks see an ostomy as a cure for an illness that threatened their lives or restricted their activities. Others take a few months, generally feeling better about the situation as soon as they master the fine art of pouch changing and maintenance. For many, ostomy surgery begins a process that appears to be, and is, very close to the grieving process, and like any grieving process, the amount of time needed to feel emotionally whole again will vary.

It took me almost two years following my surgery before I felt like I had regained my former personality and was ready to move on with my life. So there is no magic amount of time needed to adjust to your new ostomy. Allow yourself the time you need and realize that the feelings of depression and isolation will eventually go away. If the depression is severe, don't be afraid to seek professional help.

If your isolation is caused by a lack of confidence in your appliance, seek help from an ostomy nurse. If your appliance is working fine but you still feel separated from others, seek help from other ostomates. Go to a meeting and meet others in the same situation. If you don't already have one, call your local support group and ask for an ostomy visitor who can talk to you about how he or she managed post-operative emotions. But above all, give yourself time to adjust.

Why I Attend Support Group Meetings

by LeeAnn Barcus, St Peters, MO; via Chippewa Valley (WI) Rosebud Review

No one wants to be pushed into a support group or made to feel that they have to be part of one, but the benefits are so tremendous it is a shame that many ostomates are missing them. Trust me, when I first went to an ostomy support group meeting, I was one of the youngest people there. The only other young ostomate there was with her mother. All the others were much older than I was. Talk about **not** fitting in.

Well, I almost did not go back. I felt that this group could not offer anything to me in any way. Was I ever wrong!

I went back and continue to attend, because I get so much out of this group. There is a great age difference between most members and me. Many of them are old enough to be my grandparents, but like grandparents, they teach me so much, and not just about ostomies. They have taught me much about how to deal with diversity, life in general, and how to laugh at some of the most down-trodden things.

The older folks made me realize that I make a difference to them. For some, I am the reason they come to the meetings. I also make a difference to that young person who walks through the door on meeting night and sees that there are younger people there. I make a difference when there are topics other than colon cancer. I make a difference when I do the Relay for Life walk with them all. Making a difference is what it is all about, at least to me, and I feel like there is a reason for me to be there.

Certainly, there are times that I would rather not be the only young one at the meetings. I go anyway, and invariably, I am presented with an opportunity to help someone over a rough spot or to just put a smile on someone's face. When I look around and see those smiles and happy faces, I am again reminded that I had a purpose there. On this day, it was not all about me. On this day, my purpose was to be there for others, and my heart rejoiced because I was there!

HINTS & TIPS

Rounding off the square edges of a firm wafer, or skin barrier, will decrease the chance of the belt catching on the corners. Male ostomates who suffer painful collisions between the pouch tail clip and key organs, should try angling the pouch toward a pants leg instead of pointing it straight down. Wear briefs and pass the pouch through a leg opening in the brief to hold it in place. To slow down stoma activity, before changing appliances, eat a tablespoon of creamy peanut butter beforehand or eat four or five marshmallows, fifteen minutes before changing. Spearmint is one of the gentler mints. A bit of spearmint vinegar in a glass of water calms the stomach and digestive system. It also relieves gas and adds a tangy zest to iced tea. Check your rubbing alcohol if you are cleaning skin with it. If it contains glycerin this will prevent securing a good seal of the appliance. Alcohol should only be used occasionally

to degrease the skin. Stretch away tensions. When a headache begins, **STRETCH**. It helps ease tense necks, headaches, and lower back pain. Stretching brings needed blood to tight muscles and a feeling of well being. Stretch slowly, hold, do not bounce or strain.

FOR COLOSTOMATES

Via: Spacecoast Shuttle Blast

If you use a Stomahesive wafer and cut your own center hole, save the leftover pieces and use them to fill in any skin indentions around the stoma underneath the wafer.

Spray the inside of your pouch with PAM to help the contents keep sliding down instead of sticking on the sides and top of the pouch.

Apply the pouch standing, lying or sitting down, but do not allow abdominal wrinkling or this will break the seal when you straighten out.

Colostomy diet is fairly normal. You will discover which foods may not agree with you by trying everything, a little at a time. If it doesn't work the first time, wait a few weeks and try it again. If it doesn't work then, leave it alone for a few months...or forever, if necessary.

If you have difficulty with constipation, a glass of apple juice every morning and the night before irrigation may prove helpful. If you prefer, you might try taking your apple juice heated. (Add a little cinnamon...mmm!)

Colostomates who take antihistamines during the sneezing season may find that these drugs have a tendency to slow down intestinal action and the irrigation process becomes slower. Some report relief from the drug reaction by increasing the fluid intake the day they irrigate, or eating laxative foods (in moderation).

If you are irrigating and having problems with leakage between irrigations, try using less water. Too much water may contribute to leakage.

Buttermilk will soothe an irritated digestive tract and will not cause diarrhea or constipation.

Some people find that a large teaspoon of bulk gelatin dissolved in water or lemon juice once a day will firm up a loose stool.

If you are a colostomate who uses a convex insert in your face plate, and the insert becomes gucky and

sticky, try good ol' Uni-solve to remove the guck. It really works great!!!

Especially in hot weather, wear protection between the pouch and your skin to prevent rash from perspiration. You can make a pouch cover with an old handkerchief, a baby's bib, etc. Pouch covers can be purchased also.

If you are taking a bismuth preparation, try to stop taking it for one day before having an intestinal X-ray or tell the doctor, because it sometimes shows up opaque on an X-ray.

HELPFUL HINTS FROM HERE AND THERE

Write down the name of the ostomy supplier and the number and size of all your equipment. This information should be kept in a safe place for easy reference. When planning a trip, be sure to include the information in your ostomy emergency kit. Some people find that a large teaspoonful of bulk gelatin dissolved in water or lemon juice once a day will firm up a loose stool. Butternut will soothe an irritated digestive tract and will not cause diarrhea or constipation. The application of a couple of capsules of vitamin E oil broken down and rubbed on sore and irritated skin around the stoma promotes overnight healing. Drinking tomato juice will help eliminate odor and is a tool to retard dehydration and keep the electrolytes in balance. Excessively oily skin can affect adhesion of your wafer. Wiping the skin around the stoma with alcohol is helpful, but be careful the alcohol does not contain glycerin, as this kind of alcohol will hinder adhesion. If you are taking chemotherapy and your mouth is sore, gargle with one teaspoonful of baking soda in a half glass of water.

MORE HELPFUL HINTS FROM HERE AND THERE

Emotional pressures and over-fatigue can cause bowel upsets, especially when traveling. Do not allow yourself to become over-tired. For hard-to-deal-with, itchy, irritated skin due to tape burns, scar healing, pouch friction on the skin, etc., doctors often recommend a cortisone cream or ointment. Two products of this nature available without a prescription are: Cortaid or Dermolate. If you like mushrooms, remember they don't digest, so chew them well. Asparagus generates a strong odor in the urine. Yogurt, cranberry juice, and buttermilk help to combat urinary odor. Parsley is excellent in combating fecal odor, besides being a good source of potassium. Keep grape juice in the refrigerator. If you eat something that causes a blockage, just try drinking a glassful. It really works. Never wait until you've used your last appliance before ordering new ones. Keep a list of your equipment, complete with order numbers, sizes and manufacturers. Let a member of your family know where you keep the list so that they can get the necessary supplies in the event of an emergency. Use a round clothespin to roll up your tube of paste. (Works for toothpaste tubes too.) If you still have your rectum and have pain or a full feeling, you may have a collection of mucus which should be washed out. Check with your doctor regarding this. Colostomates should not use water that is too cold or too hot as it may cause cramps, pain or nausea. Do allow 45 minutes to one hour for a complete return of water. Arrange to sit for comfort and relaxation. Do not hurry through irrigation. Anxiety, frustration and spillage may result. Getting up tight can cause little or no return. For urostomates, if your drainage tube is clogged, try soaking it in a solution of Tide for about two hours. Then rub the tube between your fingers, insert a baby bottle brush as far as possible, pull out and rinse.

Man on the Street Interviews

Courtesy of the Greater Seattle Ostomy Association, "The New Outlook" and the Ostomy Association of the Greater Chicago via "The Optimist"

Source: Ostomy Association of the Houston Area—November 2013.

Lazarus Ephraim, a member of an affiliated support group in Chicago, conducted a survey during which he asked if people knew what an ostomy or ostomate is. Here are some of the answers he received to this question:

1. "I think it has to do with people who have trouble with their feet."
2. "I don't know what it is, but I understand those people don't have to go to the toilet. They just do it anywhere, put it in a bag and throw it away."
3. "I think the former pope was one for a while when he got shot."
4. "My aunt has one, but we don't talk about it."
5. "They are members of some political party."
6. "These people who have had some kind of operation and they wear a bag under their clothes. They take it off when they have to go to a party."
7. "I saw one of them on television recently, and she was all happy about something."
8. "I wouldn't want to be one, I heard it's bad."
9. "My neighbor is one. I think. She goes to a party at the hospital every month. She meets people there like her and they drink cran-berry juice."
10. "I think it has something to do with farming. I heard two of them talking about irrigation."

Ephraim feels that we have quite a bit of educating to do in the communities—and he is correct.

Do You Sometimes Feel Overwhelmed, Stressed Out, or Even Discouraged at Work?

Here's a healthy way to perk up your mood: Get an instant lift by just looking through old photos. Researchers put several common coping strategies to the test and found that flipping through personal photos improved volunteers' moods better than eating chocolate, watching TV or even listening to music. Whereas some of these strategies elevated moods by a measly 1 percent, browsing through photos gave people an 11 percent boost in happiness. Store some of your happiest snapshots on your phone or place some around your office so that, whenever you're having a hard day, you can look at them and feel instantly better.

Source: Cleveland Clinic Wellness publication, 2013; via Metro Maryland Ostomy Association Inc, Sept/Oct 2013, via Green Bay Area Ostomy Support Group Sept/Oct. 2013.

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE
7301 Red Arrow Highway – Stevensville MI 49127
(269) 429-3281

OUR MISSION: To provide free skilled home nursing services, equipment, information and supplies at cost for cancer patients and their families in Berrien County.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: at BCCS, we accept donations of ostomy supplies. We would be happy to give these supplies to anyone who can use them. Please have your supply numbers ready and call our office to see if we have what you use!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP . . . ?

Contributions to our non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation are tax deductible.

Donations to our General Fund help to balance our current budget.

Memorial contributions are made in memory of a friend or loved one who has passed away. For memorial contributions, we need to know the name of the person being memorialized as well as the name and address of their next-of-kin so that we may send them a tribute card.

Honorary contributions are made in honor of someone yet living. For honorary contributions, we need to know the name and address of the person being honored so that we may send them a letter of recognition.

Any contribution may be mailed or brought to our office.

ENDOWMENT FUND

The Berrien County Cancer Service has its own Endowment Fund to ensure that we will be available for as long as needed.

Donations to this fund may be mailed or brought to our office. We have endowments with both the Berrien Community Foundation and the Michigan Gateway Community Foundation. To make this type of donation, please send payment directly to the addresses below indicating our name on your check.

Berrien Community Foundation
2900 South State Street, Suite 2 East
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Michigan Gateway Community Foundation
111 Days Avenue
Buchanan, MI 49107

A letter to be used as a receipt and for tax purposes will be sent for all donations.

Before you follow any medical advice in this newsletter, or any other publication . . . check first with your doctor or ET.

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP

2nd Tuesday of each month- 6:00 p.m.

Lakeland Regional Medical Center

Community Room

1234 Napier Ave

St. Joseph, MI 49085

Phone: (269) 983-8804

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP

3rd Tuesday of each month- 1:30 p.m.

Berrien County Cancer Service

7301 Red Arrow Highway

Stevensville, MI 49127

Phone: (269) 429-3281

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE, INC.

7301 Red Arrow Highway
Stevensville, MI 49127

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
STEVENSVILLE, MI
PERMIT NO. 129