

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE

7301 RED ARROW HWY.

STEVENSVILLE, MI 49127



**OSTOMY
NEWSLETTER**

July – August 2013



Keeping Your Pouch Odor Proof

By Victor Alterescu, R.N.,E.T. Via: Quad City, IL Newsletter & S. Brevard FL Ostomy Newsletter

Rinsing a pouch out each time it is emptied is primarily a waste of time. For one thing, it takes longer to empty the pouch and you need more materials around you. You also leave more materials around you. You also leave more odors in the room since the pouch is kept open longer. The water, especially if it is warm, may open the pores of the pouch material and encourage odor permeation. Never use warm water. Also, rinsing can affect the seal of your adhesive. Rinsing a pouch after each emptying serves only an aesthetic purpose; the interior of the pouch may be clean but it does not serve a functional purpose. Frankly, it does not matter whether the interior of your pouch is clean any more than it matters if the interior of your colon is clean. The pouch is replacing an organ of storage, the colon and/or the rectum. The most important portion of the pouch that should cleanse very thoroughly is the tip of the drainable pouch. Rinsing the interior can only increase permeation but cleaning the exterior neck will avoid any odor that may be present as a result of having fecal residue on the end of the pouch. Therefore, I often recommend that a person carry an alcohol wipe (individually wrapped in foil) to clean the tip of the pouch. The pouch is emptied, the toilet flushed immediately, and the lower portion of the exterior pouch cleansed with toilet tissue and alcohol.

Reducing Your risk of Pneumonia

via: Sherman Area & Golden Spread Ostomy Association, Amarillo, TX

Although certain organisms are more contagious than others. It is unusual to “catch” pneumonia from someone else. You usually develop pneumonia because your own immunity is weakened. To fortify your natural resistance to pneumonia; get vaccinated. Because pneumonia can be a complication of the flu, getting a yearly flu shot is a good way to prevent pneumonia. In addition, get a vaccination against pneumococcal pneumonia at least once after age 65 or if your doctor recommends it sooner for your condition. Wash your hands frequently to decrease your exposure. Do not smoke. Smoking damages your lungs’ natural defenses against respiratory infections. Take care of yourself. Proper rest, diet and moderate exercise can help keep your immune system strong. Although most cases of pneumonia do not prove fatal, you do not want to mistake pneumonia for a cold of flu and leave it untreated.

Employment Issues

Via: Better Together Newsletter, Valley News & GB News Review

Going back to work after having a stoma has little bearing on your employment. Most people with ostomies return to their jobs after surgery. Though absence of work can be frustrating and isolating, you must allow sufficient time (Usually 3-6 months) to recover fully from your operation. Deciding when to return to work should be determined by you, your doctor, surgeon, and ET nurse. You may tire more easily upon returning to work. If so, ask your employer if you can work part-time for the first few weeks back on the job.

ON THE JOB: You will need good toilet and washing facilities at your work site, with privacy available for changing your pouch. Keep spare wafers, pouches and accessory products—plus another set of clothing—at work, just in case. If using closed-end pouches, put the used pouch in a plastic re-sealable baggie before disposing of it. After draining an open-ended pouch in the toilet, spray some air freshener.

JOB PERFORMANCE: People with ostomies perform nearly every kind of job. However, some occupations, in which work is physically uncomfortable or inconvenient, may require some precautions. If your occupation involves strenuous or repetitive physical work such as stooping, bending, or heavy lifting, be extra careful as you move about. If your work involves handling food, there is no reason why you cannot continue to do so, providing you exercise good personal hygiene. The risk of spreading germs is the same for those with ostomies as for those without.

WORK RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES; Under the American with Disabilities Act, some employers may be required to make certain accommodations for you. Inquire about this with your human resources specialist. Individuals, may, however, be required to undergo a pre-employment physical. Before accepting a position with a new employer, find out the name of their health insurance company and contact it directly to find out whether the plan covers your ostomy-related needs.

Factors Which Influence Ostomy Function

By Liz O'Connor, R.N., E.T. Via: Metro MD & Sterling Ostomy Assoc., Sterling, IL

Quite often patients experience a sudden reversal in normal ostomy function due to medications or treatments they are undergoing. The following information might be helpful to keep in mind. Antibiotics—these often cause diarrhea, even in patients without an ostomy. Ostomates are no exception, and if the problem becomes severe, notify your physician immediately. In the meantime, keep Gatorade or a like drink on hand to maintain adequate electrolyte balance.

Pain Medications—these are often constipating, extra irrigations or laxatives or stool softeners might be required for colostomates to combat the side effects of medicine. Perhaps the dosage of pain reliever can be reduced to eliminate the situation. If not, consider one of the above alternatives.

Chemotherapy—many cancer patients have follow-up chemotherapy after surgery or as an alternative to surgery. This often produces nausea and/or vomiting. Gatorade is again good to keep on hand for electrolyte balance.

Radiation Therapy—this produces the same effects as chemotherapy and should be treated accordingly.

Travel—Travel can cause constipation in some patients and diarrhea in others. Be aware that these are possibilities. Altered diet when traveling accounts for some of this, plus excitement of new surroundings. Allow sufficient time for irrigations and take along an anti-diarrhea medication. Check with your doctor if you are not familiar with what works best for you to control diarrhea.

Antacids—those with magnesium. Drink plenty of fluids—Tea is always a good source of potassium (so are orange juice and bananas). Coca Cola also contains some potassium. Bouillon cubes are a good source of sodium. Gatorade is used by athletes for electrolyte replacement. It is better served over ice. Remember that some of the signs of electrolyte imbalance are irritability, nausea and drowsiness. Be prepared and prevent this problem when possible. Keep well hydrated with adequate fluids of all types—water included.

Ostomy Myth Series

By Barbara Skoglund of Maplewood, MN

We thought that our members would like to read an updated version of this classic article on ostomy surgery. This article is a frank exposition written by a young woman who suffered from the humiliation of ulcerative colitis and was then cured when she had her colon removed and was given a permanent ileostomy. People with other types of ostomies will find this article fascinating and many applications relating generally to life with an ostomy.

As an ulcerative colitis patient for more than 14 years, I became so ill that my colon had to be removed. I was so afraid of having an ostomy that I postponed treatment and nearly died. Knowing my feelings about ostomies, my doctor performed a rarely done straight ileoanal anastomosis. He could not build a J-pouch for me. My body would not qualify.

I lived three years of hell with that “straight shot” and had an ileostomy in December 1996. It was the best Christmas gift I ever gave myself! I had many misconceptions about living with an ostomy, and I frequently encounter others with those same misconceptions. After one person too many told me that it would be better to be dead than to live like me, I decided to start a series of short articles covering the facts and fiction of ostomy life.

Ostomy Myth #1 – People with Ostomies Smell. Modern pouching systems are made of lightweight odor-proof materials. There is no ostomy smell when the new pouching systems are used correctly. No one has ever walked up to me, sniffed and said, “Girl, you smell terrible. You must have an ostomy.”

I spent the first year living with an ostomy thinking everyone could smell me. Every time we drove past one of the many Minnesota cow pastures, I was sure the smell was coming from me, and of course it was not. Some people with ostomies worry about the smell when they empty their pouch. Our waste is no more toxic than other people's; we just empty our pouch up front where our noses are located. A touch of the flush handle and away goes the smell. The roots of this smelly myth probably lay in old time ostomy appliances. Early ostomy supplies were made from non-odor-proof materials. Many people with ostomies had trouble controlling the odor from these old time appliances. Thank goodness for modern technology!

Ostomy Myth #2 – New Clothes are Necessary.

While the shop-a-holic people among us, me included, may harbor thoughts of having a perfect excuse for buying an entire new wardrobe, it is really not necessary. I have had to make only two changes in my attire because of my ileostomy. I do not wear bikinis any more, but I do not wear them any less, I never wore them. I once wore French-cut undies and now wear full-sized briefs. It is just more comfortable for me that way.

There are some people whose stomas are placed at or above the belt line. They frequently find suspenders easier to deal with than belts. If you had an experienced WOC nurse mark your abdomen before surgery, there is a good chance that a stoma at the belt line was avoided. Stomas above the beltline are usually a side effect of being obese. The surgeon cannot pull the mesentery through all the layers of fat. I had little concern about spandex, skin-tight leather or bikinis. None of these items were in my wardrobe anymore anyway.

I do know a young woman with an ostomy who still wears a bikini—she just found a new style. I am sure every person with an ostomy has stories to tell about folks who stared and stared and still could not see our pouch through our clothing. When you find yourself facing ostomy surgery, do not waste time worrying about wearing muumuus or overcoats. At the most, you may have to buy a new swimsuit or some new undies. But feel free to be like me and use it as an excuse to buy more clothes.

Ostomy Myth #3 – Somebody to Love.

A couple of times during my single days, I placed personal ads as a way to find potential mates. Before I would write my ad, I would sit down and list all the qualities I was looking for in a mate. I wanted a partner who was smart and funny, someone who shared my interests, who shared my values, etc. Nowhere on that list did it mention that my partner must not have an ostomy.

I used to think that no one out there would be interested in me if I had an ostomy. I was convinced that people with ostomies sat home, smelled badly, wore baggy clothes, and were lonely and friendless. You would think I would still harbor this myth since my first finance' took a walk when I had my temporary ileostomy while my ileoanastomosis was healing. To tell the truth, it was pretty clear that we did not split over how I went to the bathroom. We split because we were not right for each other. I have since found my soul mate and life partner. He could not care less how I go to the toilet. What he

cares about is that I am healthy. You see, he loves me regardless of my possession of a butt hole or not.

Consider this question: do single people with ostomies have a more difficult time with dating? The true answer is that some do and some do not. Many are very confident and act like any other self-assured person. I have found that those who do not date are too afraid to get out there and try. It is all in their head and not on their tummy. Yes, I would not be surprised if an ostomy challenged someone's casual exploits—you know what I mean. However, if you are interested in finding a life partner who loves you, the possession of an ostomy will not stop you. Realistically, some people prefer to marry college graduates, some prefer a mate of the same religion, some prefer black people, some white people some want someone younger, some the same age. In America, you should choose the person you want. Do not settle. However, he/she has a choice to pick you or not also, regardless of you having an ostomy or not. Many people use an ostomy as an excuse for failed relationships. It is rarely true. Research shows that people with ostomies have fewer divorces than the population in general!

If anything, an ostomy may be good test of what a potential mate is really interested in. I never think of myself, "Will you still need me when I'm 64?" I know my husband is with me forever.

Ostomy Hints

Two-piece users . . . Make sure the pouch is snapped onto the flange on the skin barrier securely. Take that extra second to be sure.

Once a year or so have your stoma and your pouching system checked by a WOC nurse.

Do not use antibiotics for colds or the flu unless a doctor orders it. Antibiotics can change the proper balance of bacteria in the intestines and cause diarrhea. Antibiotics will also make you much more susceptible to fungal infections under your barrier as well as MRSA infections.

Parsley is one of nature's best deodorants. Do not push it away on our plate. Have some.

Store pouching systems away from warm humid places. Melt out can render equipment ineffective. Most ostomy equipment does not have a specific shelf life, per se, if it is stored in the proper environment.

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.

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7301 Red Arrow Highway

Stevensville, MI 49127

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7301 Red Arrow Highway
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