

BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE

7301 RED ARROW HWY.

STEVENSVILLE, MI 49127



OSTOMY

NEWSLETTER

July - August 2007



United Way
of Southwest Michigan
And
United Way
of Greater Niles

The Ostomy Support Group will meet with the Cancer Support Group at BCCS on the 17th of July and the 21st of August at 1:30 p.m.

Quick Tips for the Workplace
Via Better Together Newsletter
Dallas, TX and Battle Creek, MI

Back to work 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 appliance. 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 appliance 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 the work is physically uncomfortable or inconvenient, may require some precautions. If your occupation requires strenuous or repetitive physical work such as bending, stooping, 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 as for those with ostomies and 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.

Generic Medications

Via Ostomy Association of Oklahoma City Incorporated

Many brand-named medications are available in generic form. Generic drugs have the same active ingredients, strengths and dosages as brand-name products.

Brand-name and generics may not always look alike. For example, one pill may be blue and the other white. The difference does not affect the potency or effectiveness of your medication.

Generic drugs are as safe and effective as brand-name drugs.

They must meet the same stringent standards set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Generics may cost less than half the price of brand-name varieties.

Always ask your doctor and your pharmacist if there is a generic version of the medication you take.

Keep a Medical Journal

Via South Brevard, FL, Mesa, AZ and Santa Barbara UOA

Often a problem has been nagging at your body for weeks. Sometimes a piece of equipment doesn't work properly.

When you finally go to the doctor, or consult an ET nurse, you find that they ask questions that you can't answer. As a result, their diagnosis is based on incomplete information.

To avoid such an event, it's wise to write down the symptoms or problems as they occur. Often you will find that through the writing of the symptoms and the preceding events you can spot some obvious solutions.

A medical journal can provide you and your doctor with welcome and accurate information.

Summer Suggestions For Appliance Storage

Author: Bill Capman, Worcester Ostomy Assoc.

Be careful where you leave those extra appliances. Very high temperatures can develop when a closed vehicle is left in the sun, especially at the beach or in an exposed parking lot. Appliances which are not properly protected may be unusable, and it may be at a time when you need them the most. If you must leave your supplies in a closed car for an extended period, put them in an insulated bag or cooler and keep the container covered and out of the direct sunlight. This method may not guarantee total protection but should provide adequate short term protection for day trips. Don't keep a large quantity of supplies on hand, especially in the summer. Let your supplier store them – hot and humid weather can damage appliances.

Learning to Cope with a Colostomy

Taken From: *COPING'S 2006 FOCUS ON COLORECTAL CANCER*

Living with a colostomy – that is, managing the everyday tasks associated with changing and emptying a pouch and maintaining good colostomy hygiene – is different from coping with a colostomy. Coping with a colostomy is about psychologically learning to live with a colostomy and accepting the changes it may require in your lifestyle.

There are times after surgery when you may feel discouraged. You may feel alone and isolated. Because the whole experience is so new to you, you may feel awkward, frustrated, and uncertain. You may feel uncomfortable dealing with your personal bodily functions, and you may worry about repulsing others or may yourself feel some initial revulsion emptying your pouch or irrigating your stoma. These feelings and reactions are normal. You might cry, be hostile or angry, and react in ways that are unusual for you.

Talking to your partner, a trusted friend, or a member of the clergy can help. The members of your healthcare team (especially ostomy nurses, social workers, and counselors), and other people with ostomies may help you work through these feelings. Many people say that they worried about not being able to see themselves in the same way again and wondered whether they would be able to regain and maintain their normal lifestyle.

There will certainly be some changes as you adjust to a colostomy, but many people can attest to the fact that most aspects of your life can proceed as before an ostomy.

You will find as you talk to people that ostomies are more common than you realize. A variety of medical conditions may require ileostomy or colostomy, including cancer, diverticulitis, bowel obstruction, injury, and birth defects. Many people live with their ostomies for years.

Finding Support: Your doctor, an ostomy nurse, and other healthcare professionals on your team are important sources of information and support. Because one of the most difficult aspects of having an ostomy can be the initial reaction to seeing the stoma and pouch on your abdomen, your healthcare team will help you change and empty your pouch and will teach you how to manage and adjust to this change in the days and weeks immediately after the surgery.

The United Ostomy Association of America Web site has information about ostomies and supplies. Emotional support is available through local chapters. You can locate a chapter near you by calling (800) 826-0826 or visiting their web site.

Taking part in an ostomy support group or participating in an online “chat room” may also help. A support group allows you to share your feelings and ask questions. It also allows you to share your successful adjustment with others who may need the benefit of your experience.

The Wounds, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (888-224-9626 or www.wocn.org) also supplies information and can give local referrals for ostomy nurse specialists.

Telling Others About Your Surgery: You might be worried about how others will accept you and how you will explain your surgery. You can tell your friends and relatives as much as you want them to know. If you have children, answer their questions simply and truthfully. If you take a matter-of-fact approach, they are likely to adopt it too. If you are considering entering into a serious or intimate relationship, discussions with your partner about life with a colostomy will help to alleviate misconceptions.

(EXERPTED WITH PERMISSION FROM American Cancer Society's Complete Guide to Colorectal Cancer 2006 by the American Cancer Society, Inc., www.cancer.org/bookstore)

Those First Few Pouch Changes **Via Ostomy Association of Oklahoma City Inc.**

Zinging through another change the other day, my mind wandered, as it often does when I am doing some routine chore. I've had an ileostomy for more than ten years and have had more than 600 pouches. I use the typical two-piece with a flexible wafer that sticks to my abdomen. What I got to thinking about was a problem I had with my very first few pouches – getting the old one off. To work right, the wafer has to stick really well: otherwise it will come loose and make a mess, usually at the worst time and place. The problem I had was that it hurt to pull off the used wafer. I still remember the first one I had to remove. It was only a few days after surgery, and the nurse came in to teach me about changing the pouch. After she left, I went to work, but every time I tugged at the wafer, it hurt like “h***”, just like pulling a giant Band-Aid off tender skin. It took a half-hour, “ouching” the whole time. I was extremely depressed when I finally got done. “How am I ever going to live with this?” I thought. Nowadays, removing the wafer takes about three seconds and is so routine there's almost no sensation: in fact, my problem is keeping my mind on what I am doing. One detail that makes a big difference was a tip from my nurse, “instead of grabbing the wafer and pulling on it, you hold one edge in one hand and push the skin away with the other hand.” Believe me, it works! The reason I am writing this note is to reassure you if you are just starting out with an ostomy. Every pouch you change will get easier, and the pain of getting each off your tender skin keeps getting less and less. Stick with it – you will get past this too.

Author: An “old timer”

Rinsing Out Your Pouch

**By Victor Alterescu, WOC Nurse
The New Outlook, August 2006**

Rinsing out a pouch 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 odors in the room since the pouch is kept open longer.

The water used to wash out the pouch, especially if it is warm, may open the pores of the pouch material and encourage odor permeation. If you do rinse out a pouch, never use warm water. In addition, rinsing can affect the seal of the skin barrier adhesive.

Rinsing out 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 intestines are clean. The pouch is replacing an organ of storage, the colon and rectum.

The most important portion of the pouch that should be cleansed very thoroughly is the tip of a drainable pouch. Rinsing the interior can only increase permeation of odor, but cleaning the exterior neck will avoid any odor that may be present because 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.

Editor's note: Some of our members do regularly rinse out their pouches. If the pouch is a one-piece, we do this with cool water and a gently swishing action so as not to interfere with the barrier seal. Two-piece ostomy systems allow the pouch to be removed and then rinsed. This is done primarily as an aesthetic exercise, which is fine. We mostly wear opaque pouches anyway for the sole reason of obtaining a sportier look even though we are the only ones ever to see the pouch.

Something for the New Ostomate

Don't forget, Rome was not built in a day. If changing your appliance seems to take forever, with a little practice it will soon become a small part of your normal day. "Waste disposal" for you once again will become a private matter. DO learn to care for yourself from the start. You may not always have someone around to assist you. DO COME TO OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS where you can talk to others about your problems. You'll be surprised at the ease with which you can discuss problems once you're there. Bring your family members with you. It's also important to have them understand ostomy problems and their solutions.

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BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICE
7301 Red Arrow Highway - Stevensville MI 49127
Stevensville: (269) 429-3281 Niles: (269) 683-7460

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 Stevensville 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 Stevensville or Niles offices.

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 Stevensville or Niles offices. We have partnered with the Berrien Community Foundation and the Michigan Gateway Community Foundation to enable donors to take full tax credit advantage from the Michigan Community Foundation Tax Credit.

To make this type of donation, please send payment directly to:

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.

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