

# Stoma Care Guide

## What Is A Stoma?

A stoma is a surgically created opening in the abdomen that allows waste to exit the body when the normal route is no longer possible. Stomas may be temporary or permanent and are most commonly formed as a result of conditions such as bowel cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, diverticulitis, or injury to the bowel.

If you are about to undergo stoma surgery, or are adjusting to life with a stoma, this guide provides essential information on how to manage your stoma, access support, and lead a full and active life.

## What To Expect After Stoma Surgery

Following your surgery, you will have a colostomy or ileostomy, depending on your medical condition. Your stoma care nurse will provide guidance on:

- How to change and care for your stoma
- Adjusting to your new routine, including diet and hydration
- What to expect in terms of bowel function and output
- How to regain confidence in daily activities

## Changing Your Stoma Bag

It is normal to feel anxious about changing your bag for the first time at home. With practice, this will become a straightforward routine.

### Steps for changing a stoma bag:

- **Gather supplies** – stoma bag (cut to size), wipes, disposal bag, and warm water
- **Wash your hands thoroughly** before and after changing your stoma bag
- **Gently remove the used stoma bag**, peeling it away from the skin while supporting your abdomen

- **Clean your stoma** with warm water and dry the surrounding skin carefully
- **Ensure the area is fully dry** before applying a new bag to avoid irritation
- **Apply the new bag**, making sure it fits securely and without creases

Your stoma care nurse will help you find the best appliances and skincare products to prevent irritation and ensure comfort.

## Stoma Supplies And Prescriptions

You will be sent home with a supply of stoma bags and accessories. Further supplies can be obtained by:

- Requesting a prescription from your GP and collecting it from a pharmacy
- Using a home delivery service, which many stoma care providers offer
- If you are under 60 years old, you may be eligible for free prescriptions using an FP92A exemption certificate

Your stoma care nurse can help arrange the best method for you.

## Diet And Hydration

After surgery, your digestive system needs time to adjust. Eating small, regular meals and chewing food thoroughly can help digestion.

### **Foods that may thicken stoma output:**

- Bananas
- Bread
- Pasta
- Rice

- Porridge

### **Foods that may loosen output:**

- Alcohol
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Spicy foods

### **Foods that can cause wind:**

- Beans
- Onions
- Broccoli
- Fizzy drinks

Drinking 6-8 glasses of fluids daily helps maintain hydration, especially for those with an ileostomy, as fluids are absorbed differently. Your stoma care nurse can offer further dietary advice based on your individual needs.

## **Exercise And Activity**

In the weeks following surgery, you should avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity. However, walking and gentle movement are encouraged.

- Avoid lifting heavy objects for at least 6 weeks to reduce the risk of a parastomal hernia
- Core strengthening exercises can help support your abdominal muscles after surgery
- Over time, you can return to most forms of exercise, including swimming and running

Your surgeon or stoma nurse will provide guidance on when it is safe to return to more intense activities.

## Returning To Work

You can return to work when you feel ready and your doctor confirms you are fit. Some people prefer a phased return, starting part-time before resuming full duties. Your employer may need to make reasonable adjustments, such as providing access to toilets or allowing flexible breaks.

## Travel And Driving

- Avoid driving for 6-8 weeks post-surgery or until you feel comfortable wearing a seatbelt
- Consider using a seatbelt adjuster to avoid pressure on your stoma
- Always carry extra supplies when travelling
- If flying, pack stoma supplies in hand luggage and bring a doctor's letter if needed for airport security

## Insurance And Stoma Awareness

Some travel insurance companies may charge extra for a pre-existing condition. Stoma support organisations can recommend insurance providers that offer fair coverage without additional costs.

## Rectal Discharge And Bleeding

If your rectum has not been removed, you may still experience:

- **The sensation of needing to pass stool**, even though waste exits through the stoma
- **Mucus discharge from the rectum**, which is normal and can be managed with pads if necessary

Mild bleeding when cleaning around the stoma is common due to delicate tissue. However, persistent bleeding or signs of infection should be reported to your doctor or stoma nurse.

## Coping And Emotional Support

Adjusting to life with a stoma can be overwhelming at first, and it is completely normal to experience a mix of emotions. Support is available through:

- **Your stoma care nurse** – for practical advice and reassurance
- **Patient support groups** – many people find comfort in connecting with others who have a stoma
- **Counselling services** – available for those struggling with the emotional impact of surgery

You do not have to go through this alone—there is plenty of support available.

## Why Choose The Midlands Bowel Clinic?

- **Expert colorectal surgeons and specialist stoma care nurses**
- **Tailored advice and support** for managing your stoma with confidence
- **Access to leading stoma products and prescription services**
- **Ongoing aftercare and follow-up appointments** to monitor your progress

Whether you need guidance in adjusting to your stoma, managing complications, or accessing the latest support and products, we are here to help.

## Contact Us

If you need support with your stoma care or want to learn more about our services, please get in touch. We are here to support you on your journey to recovery and confidence with a stoma.