



Your Guide to Common Stoma Problems



If you're living with a stoma, all sorts of issues can arise over time. This is completely normal and, generally, no reason for immediate panic! This booklet will help you find your way through the stoma problem jungle. If you have any further questions or are experiencing an issue that we haven't covered, get in touch with our Customer Care team on 00344 225 1519. They'll be more than happy to try and help you get to the bottom of your problem.

Skin problems

The skin around your stoma can become sore very quickly. This is especially the case, if you've got sensitive skin. That's why a good skin hygiene routine is super important when you're living with a stoma!

Output is leaking onto your skin

When your stoma bag isn't sitting properly, output can easily leak onto your skin and cause skin irritation and discomfort. You can try to prevent this by regularly measuring your stoma. This will ensure that your skin barrier is cut to the correct size and will also help you to catch any changes to your stoma. If your stoma is not protruding enough and you feel like that's the reason for your leakage, have a chat with your stoma care nurse about a convex skin barrier.

Your hair follicles are inflamed

If the area around your stoma is quite hairy and not shaved properly, hair follicles can become inflamed more easily. The best way to try and prevent this from happening is to shave the area properly with a clean, sharp razor and to be super gentle when removing your skin barrier.



You're changing your skin barrier too often

Does your skin get irritated quite easily when you have to remove your skin barrier? Then a two-piece system might be a great choice for you! That way, you can change your pouch without having to change the baseplate every time. This is much gentler on the skin and will help you to protect it.

Are you using soap to wash the area around your stoma?

If your skin is already irritated, try to not use any soap and simply clean the area with water and dry wipes. If you feel more comfortable after using soap, however, make sure to use a mild one without perfumes.



You might be allergic to any of the products you use

Your skin irritation can be due to an allergic reaction to any of the products you use. This can be the adhesive, the adhesive remover, any soaps, etc. If you think that allergies are the cause for your skin irritation, have a chat with your stoma care nurse. They will be able to suggest some alternative products.

Bleeding

Are you experiencing slight bleeding from the surface of your stoma or the skin around it? Then that's no reason to panic! This can happen super easily when cleaning it or when changing your pouch. If your baseplate or pouch aren't sitting properly, rubbing can be a potential cause for bleeding too. Make sure to measure your stoma if you think that's the case!

If you can't stop the bleeding, it gets stronger, or the blood is coming from inside your stoma, then please get in touch with your stoma care nurse or GP immediately.

Wind

With a stoma, passing wind can make you feel very self-conscious as you don't have any control over when you pass wind.

To reduce the amount of wind, try avoiding the following:

- Beans, peas, onions, leeks, unripe bananas, cooked & cooled potatoes, sweetcorn, eggs, and nuts
- Beer & fizzy drinks
- Artificial sweeteners in drinks, on cereal, or as sweets or mints
- Chewing gum

If you are diabetic and have to take sweeteners but suffer with wind, please speak to your doctor or nurse about it. You might be referred to a dietitian that for advice. And if you really fancy a fizzy drink, it's a good idea to shake it gently or to pour it and let it stand for 10 minutes before you drink it. This helps to reduce fizz and with it the wind! Wind can also be caused by eating in a hurry and swallowing too much air, eating your meals at irregular times, and going for prolonged periods without food. So, if you prone to wind, make sure to eat regularly, take your time, and reduce talking while eating to a minimum.

Odour

After your ostomy surgery, you might be worrying about odour coming from your stoma. If you find yourself doing that, it's always helpful to remember that you're probably a lot more conscious of this than anyone around you. As a matter of fact, most people don't even know that you have a stoma! If you do feel like odour might be a problem, however, try asking someone you trust about it – like a close family member or a friend.

There are a few things you can try to reduce the odour coming from your stoma pouch. Avoiding particular foods, is a great example. Fish, eggs, asparagus, onions, green vegetables, cheese, baked, beans, and even cucumber are known to increase the odour coming from your pouch. So you might want to consider a trial and error period to see whether any foods are causing your odour problems. There are also ostomy deodorants in various different fragrances that can help you feel more confident.



Pancaking

Pancaking means that a vacuum will develop where the inside of your pouch sticks to the stoma. This usually leads to the stoma output not moving down into the pouch but building up on top of the stoma. Often, this is helped by lubricating the inside of your ostomy bag.

Ballooning

Air from the stoma can cause your ostomy bag to expand. This happens when the air from the stoma inflates the bag is unable to escape through the inbuilt filter. The air will then cause pressure, causing the adhesive barrier to detach from the skin. This generally leads to leakage that can be quite extensive.

Diarrhoea

Suffering from diarrhoea is never pleasant, but it's even more unpleasant with a stoma. Watery and loose stools are often caused by certain foods and drinks such as beans, peas, chocolates, prunes, spinach, raw fruit, and pure fruit juice. Your diarrhoea might also be caused by eating spicy food. Ideally, it would be best to avoid these foods but if you just need your spice kick, eating them in small quantities with plenty of rice, pasta or potatoes can help. Loose stools can also be triggered by other factors, however. These include stress, strain, emotional upset, certain types of viruses and bacteria, or it can be a side-effect of certain types of medication.

If your diarrhoea is only temporary, your nurse or doctor might suggest treating it with motion management medicines to slow your bowels down and thicken the stool. If this doesn't help and the problem persists without an obvious cause, however, speak to your doctor again. He or she will likely check for any underlying issues and make sure to avoid dehydration.

Constipation

Constipation is not just irritating; it can also be quite uncomfortable and painful. If you're suffering from constipation regularly, it might be worth considering some simple changes to your diet. Eating more fibre-containing foods can help to treat and prevent constipation.

Foods that increase the amount of fibre in your diet are:

- Wholemeal bread or pasta
- Whole grain cereal (e.g. Weetabix)
- Porridge
- Fruit and vegetables

It's not just foods that can cause your constipation, though! You might be constipated because you're not drinking enough fluids (always aim for 6-8 glasses per day) not getting enough exercise, or it might be due to certain medicines like painkillers or antidepressants. If you think the latter might be the case, please do not stop taking your medicine without consulting with your nurse or doctor first!

Common Urostomy Problems

Urinary crystals

If there's lots of alkaline in your urine, you're more likely to develop urinary crystals. They are white and gritty little particles in your pee that can cause irritation and bleeding around your stoma. How can you prevent this? By making sure that your pee is acidic enough to fight those nasty little things! Cranberry juice, live yoghurt, and good hydration are things that can help with that. If you're already suffering from urinary crystals, have a chat with your stoma care nurse or, alternatively, give our Customer Care team a ring. They'll be able to point you in the direction of special gels and washes that help to remove them.



Mucous build up

As your urostomy was created with a piece of your small intestine, a bit of mucous building up is completely normal. It will look white and sticky and might fool you into thinking that you're getting an infection of some kind. How do you know whether it's mucous or an infection? Unfortunately, there's no definite way to tell which of the two it is. So, if you're unsure, it's best to give your stoma care nurse or GP a ring and get it checked out!

Urine infection

If your urine is getting cloudy, darker in colour, and strong smelling, you might be suffering from a urine infection. Other symptoms can include a high temperature, chills, nausea, and vomiting. Does that sound familiar to the situation you're currently in? Then it's time to give your stoma care nurse or GP a call. If you're prone to developing urine infections, you might want to speak to a healthcare professional about preventative medication. Don't just take any over the counter medication as this could interfere with your prescription items!

How to get in touch

If you have any further questions or just want a little chat, our lovely Customer Care team is here for you.

Opening hours:

Monday – Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 8am to 1pm

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