



AFFILIATED SUPPORT GROUP

Affiliate Group #004

Clearwater Ostomy Support Group

www.clearwaterostomy.org
clearwaterostomy@gmail.com
SUPPORT LINE 727-490-9931



APRIL 2024

Next Meeting

Saturday, April 20, 2024

Support Meeting 10:30 am

The Masonic Lodge
1145 Highland Ave NE
Largo, FL 33770

UPCOMING EVENTS

2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Subject to changel

May 18

June 15

Future dates and locations are still to be determined and confirmed.

the President's Message

Hi Everyone,

We had a great number of attendees at the March meeting. Lots of new faces! We hope you continue to join us!

Our new website is live at ClearwaterOstomy.org. You will find lots of information there.

The April speakers will be Lila Watkins and Karen Burdewick (CWO CN) from the Ostomy Clinic. These ladies have a huge amount of knowledge to share with you!

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Blessings,

Marilyn



Our meetings are open to new ostomates, the experienced ostomates, the caregivers, the families, the healthcare workers, the support persons, the nursing students, the social workers and anyone who has a connection with ostomies and would like to join us. We welcome you all!

TIPS & TRICKS

Tips for Healing

1. **Get Moving.** As soon and as much as possible. Patients who are up and out of bed, walking, and moving around will heal faster.
2. **Good Nutrition.** Nutrition after surgery is just as important as before your surgery. Consuming abundant protein is essential for healing tissue, so indulge in your favorite protein foods.
3. **Don't Smoke.** Smoking is a significant risk factor for post-operative infections and is known to slow down the healing process due to its detrimental impact on circulation.
4. **Topical Treatments.** Check with your surgeon and ask when it's okay to apply a topical cream or oil to your wound, such as vitamin E oil or another product that he/she recommends. If you begin applying a topical product to your incision site three weeks after surgery, it may help minimize scarring.
5. **Visualization.** If you are open to the idea, experiment using the power of your mind to assist with your healing process. Picture yourself engaging in your favorite activities, so much so that you actually start "feeling" it with the positive emotions you would experience if your visualization were reality. It may sound a little farfetched to some, but it certainly could not hurt to give visualization exercises a try.

If you are experiencing damaged skin around your stoma or continuing to experience leakage issues, please contact our Ostomy Clinic at 727-744-2660.

WHEN TO CALL A DOCTOR OR WOC NURSE

1. If cramps last more than two or three hours.
2. If you get a deep cut in your stoma or bleeding at the juncture of the skin and stoma.
3. If you have excessive bleeding from the stoma opening or a moderate amount in the pouch after several times emptying.
4. If you have a strong odor lasting more than a week.
5. If you have severe skin irritation or deep ulcers.
6. If you have severe watery discharge lasting more than five or six hours.
7. If you have an unusual change in the size or appearance of your stoma.



Coping with Leaks

It's every ostomate's fear...a leaking appliance. Who gets leaks and why do they happen? Even 'old hands' can have an accident but such things are more common with newbies. You can't learn it all overnight and accidents are part of everyone's learning curve. As you become more skillful in applying your bag, more knowledgeable about products and more in tune with your new body, the likelihood of leaks will decrease. Accidents are more likely to occur with an ileostomy or transverse colostomy than with a descending or sigmoid colostomy. The latter's waste tend to be more firm, hence less likely to leak. The more liquid the waste, the greater the likelihood of accidents. So who has the greatest chance of developing leaks? You guessed it - urostomates.

Why do some people get leaks and others very few or none at all?

Your stoma may be too short. Most surgeons will try to give you a stoma of reasonable length. - not too long, not too short. But despite their best efforts, the healing process is not always 100% predictable. Ideally, the stoma should protrude one half inch to an inch from your body. If it is shorter than this, it will

be difficult for waste of any type to exit the body and fall cleanly into the bag. Stomas that are too short or flush with the skin should have a convex flange. This is a faceplate that is formed in such a manner that when applied, it gently pushes the peristomal skin down, giving your stoma more of a chance to expel waste into the bag rather than under the flange.



Lumpy tummy.

Lots of us have lumps, bumps, cellulite, stretch marks, old scars, pot bellies, dimple and hair plus we gain weight and we lose weight. All that can add up to quite a challenge for the best of products.

A flange sticks best to an even, flat surface so if you have an irregular tummy you may need to even it out with paste, or if things still won't stick consider Eakin seals. Men need to carefully shave abdomen hair around the stoma.

Some stomas are harder to manage than others.

Sometimes the placement of the stoma is in a difficult spot, is too low for an overweight patient to properly see, or too high where clothing interferes. Sometimes they are placed too close to folds of skin, or to the navel, or other

irregular areas of the abdomen. A poorly placed stoma will require more care and vigilance to avoid leaks. Consider using an ostomy belt.

Are you emptying often enough?

Weight on the flange can increase the risk of a leak. Empty before your pouch is a third full, or sooner if you can.

How active are you?

When you get home after surgery, you will want to rest and sleep. It stands to reason that a lot of lying down will increase the chances of waste staying near the top of the bag and getting under the flange. As you become physically active again, some positions that involve bending or twisting can cause a flange or bag to loosen or pop off. Consider using paste or Eakin seals under the flange, tape around the outer edges, or an ostomy belt.

Is your changing technique correct?

You can forget what you learned in the hospital, or misunderstand, or think you have it down pat and get careless. Or you may have been in a hospital with no minimal post-op surgery training.

Educate yourself about products!!

There are many different brands and models out there - you don't have to stay with the same brand and model you were discharged with!! If you're not happy with your current product, take some time to learn about alternatives. Everyone is different - what works for one person may not work for another. Don't put up with an appliance model that isn't right for you. If you need help finding a product that works for you, our Ostomy Clinic can help you try to find the right fit. Just call Lila Watkins at 727-744-2660 for an appointment to the clinic at 3350 East Bay Drive.

Adhesions and Other Pains That Cramp Your Style

An adhesion is a band of scar tissue that joins two internal surfaces of the body that are usually separate. The formation of scar tissue is the body's repair mechanism in response to tissue disturbance caused by surgery, infection, injury (trauma) or radiation. Adhesions may form spontaneously but are more common after surgery. Some people are adhesion prone, forming them more frequently and to a greater degree than others. Unfortunately, the surgical removal of adhesions can cause new adhesions to form. If adhesions interfere with normal motion of the intestine, a blockage may occur, with food, liquid or even air unable to pass the blocked area. Severe bloating, abdominal pain, vomiting and constipation may occur. In such a serious situation, call your doctor immediately. In many cases the possibility of adhesions wrongly gets the rap for abdominal pain. A frequent cause for such pain is a spasm, of the muscles responsible for peristalsis, which propels the "bolus" or small, rounded mass of a substance which occurs (for example, when food is not chewed properly) through the intestines. A muscle spasm in the calf is referred to as a "Charlie horse." Spasm



IMPORTANT

>>> ANNOUNCEMENT <<<

Patient Classes: How to live with an Ostomy

Free virtual Patient Classes held on
Ostomy101.com on
April 13 at 12:30 Eastern time.

2024 dates and join session link are
available at Ostomy101.com

**Other sessions and topics are
available too.**

To Be or Not to Be—Open about your Ostomy—that is the question.

Every person with an ostomy has their own unique story and journey. Someone may have been suffering from Inflammatory Bowel Disease for many years before finally agreeing to surgery and an ostomy. Someone else may have been blindsided with a new rectal cancer diagnosis and find themselves with an ostomy just a few short weeks later. Others may have lived their entire lives with an ostomy due to trauma or congenital anomaly, and therefore, know no other way of life. No matter the reason for the needing it, every person has a different path to acceptance of their ostomy. Some are immediately open about their ostomy and are happy to discuss their new situation with friends, family or even new acquaintances. Others remain incredibly private and choose only to reveal knowledge of their ostomy to a minimal few. And I think the majority of ostomates fall somewhere on the spectrum between these two extremes. A person's place on this spectrum can also change over time (in both directions), depending on both positive and negative experiences someone might have. The important thing to remember is that as an ostomate - it's YOUR CHOICE. There is no right or wrong way to live with an ostomy. It can also be comforting to know if a patient is facing an upcoming ostomy surgery or as a new ostomate that there are many things one can do to conceal and hide their ostomy should they to do so.

Here is a list of tips:

- ◆ High waisted clothing - Luckily high waisted pants, shorts and swimsuits are

currently in fashion, making it easy to find articles of clothing to conceal your ostomy without having to purchase specific items made for ostomates.

- ◆ Clothing that is patterned or loose fitting will help to make a full ostomy bag less noticeable until you are able to empty it. Also, keeping with you a light jacket, sweater or scarf that can be worn or placed around your waist can be useful.
- ◆ Control top underwear or belly band. You don't want anything that is extremely tight that will occlude stoma output but a snug fit will help to conceal any bulges as the bag may fill up.
- ◆ Empty your pouch often. If you empty often output will not accumulate in bag and will be less noticeable.
- ◆ Use an ostomy appliance with a filter. A filter will help to prevent gas build up in the bag even when you have no output. Because the filter uses carbon, gas is able to be released without odor.
- ◆ Avoiding foods with increased gas production can help to prevent the ballooning that can happen as well. Over the counter anti-gas medication can also help to prevent/treat increased gas. However, please discuss with your medical provider before trying this.
- ◆ Remember - you are likely more self-conscious of your ostomy than anyone else around you. Even if you may think it is very noticeable, chances are it is not!

No matter how open you choose to be about your ostomy, remember that it is your choice. But also remember all that you have been through with the journey that led you to your ostomy. Your stoma is like a scar or wound, proof of a hard battle you have fought and won.



Practical Suggestions for Living Well With an Ostomy

One of the many benefits of participating in an Ostomy Support Group is discovering a variety of practical tips from those with more experience and varying perspectives. Here's a summary of local tips:

Maintain a positive attitude to live well with your ostomy - not just survive it.

- ◆ It's important to face and overcome your fear of having an accident. Be prepared physically, as well as emotionally, that although accidents are embarrassing, they can be managed. Avoid allowing your worries about "What if?" to severely limit your ability to go out and enjoy doing things! Yes, there 's a risk, but the alternative is living a very narrow and constricted life.
- ◆ Whenever possible, try to find the humor within challenging situations.
- ◆ Find ways to manage the odor from your ostomy.
- ◆ Remember, odors can be a helpful signal that you're leaking and it's time to change your bag.]
- ◆ Be aware that specific foods can al-

so increase odor - such as eggs and meat, and gassy cruciferous vegetables.

- ◆ Some ostomates prefer using bags, with or without filters, to help reduce odor.
- ◆ Those with a urostomy night leg bag recommend washing out these bags on a daily basis using a 50/50 white vinegar and water solution and allowing the bag to air dry.

Explore various types of clothing accessories to expand your comfort and confidence.

Wear a "swim wrap" from www.ostomysecrets.com for extra protection while swimming, or for nighttime wear and sexual intimacy. Basically it's a tube of polyester material with pouches to provide support for your bag. They also sell specialized underwear with pockets for ostomy bags. Explore different types of underwear that provide extra support for your bag. For example, some women's underwear uses a blend with Lycra™ which can help to hold the bag more firmly to your skin. Or choose a brief with a "muffin top" extra band at the top for extra coverage to

hide the top of the bag/wafer from peeking out under your pants. Many urostomates prefer to wear suspenders vs a belt. Ostomy nurses often recommend wearing some type of supportive belt to prevent hernias, as well as accidents.

The Phoenix magazine often advertises ostomy bag covers in various designs to camouflage your bag.

Other tips:

If you have a high output ileostomy, try using a bag with a spout ostomy bag covers in various designs to camouflage your bag. (similar to a urostomy) for easier emptying.

Mark your calendar when you last changed your bag to track when you need to change it again, as well as when to order future ostomy supplies.

Skin Care—Allergic Dermatitis and Reactions

Allergic Dermatitis is a skin reaction that is red, bumpy, and swollen that has specific margins that mirror the causative agent. Allergic dermatitis is caused by an allergic skin reaction occurring when the body develops antibodies against an allergen - wafer, paste, plastic, dye in tape, liquid plastics. When suspecting an allergy, check it out by skin testing. Apply product to another area of abdomen on healthy skin and leave in place as long as possible (a week) and check the reaction.

Allergic Reactions - Many times I hear that people are allergic to adhesive tape or paper tape or Skin Prep or any number of different products that are used in ostomy care. Allergies may occur with any product. They may occur with the first use of a product or after years of using a product without problems. Actual allergic reactions to ostomy products are not common. But, some people do have issues relating to an allergic reaction to certain products

at certain times. And many people have sensitivities at one time or another. Allergic reactions are usually severe. They will cause blistering and wet, weeping skin wherever the products touch you. Two situations are frequently labelled as allergic by mistake.

First, if a skin sealant wipe is used, it needs to dry completely to allow the solvents to evaporate. If the pouch is applied while the solvents are still on the skin, sore skin can easily occur. Since the solvents can't evaporate through the skin barrier as they can through the paper tape collar, this will look like an allergy to the skin barrier.

Second, each time you remove a pouch, the adhesive takes with it the top layer of dead skin cells. This is called "skin stripping." Everyone's skin reacts differently to having tape removed. But it's important to be gentle and not remove a pouch more frequently than necessary. Skin that is stripped will be sore in some spots and not in others. Sometimes skin

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around the stoma becomes fragile and strips easily. A barrier, tape and pouch with a very gentle adhesive must be found.

To test whether you are really allergic, take a small piece of the test material and place it on any convenient part of your skin far away from your stoma. After 48 hours, take it off and see whether you are reacting. If pain, itching or blistering occurs, take it off immediately.

If it's an allergy you will react. If you have a history of allergies, test in this manner before trying on any new ostomy product. It is better to have half an inch of sore skin on your leg than

If you develop an allergy to a product you have used for a long time, you can call the manufacturer. They may have made changes in the manufacturing process. Calls from users are sometimes their first notice that the new improvements are or are not working.

A follow-up visit to your ostomy nurse should be your next step.



Calcium Supplements—What are the Differences???

Osteoporosis, which means “porous bones,” causes bones to become weak and brittle - so brittle that even mild stresses like bending over, lifting a vacuum cleaner or coughing can cause a fracture. In most cases, bones weaken when you have low levels of calcium, phosphorus and other minerals in your bones. Osteoporosis can also accompany endocrine disorders or result from excessive use of drugs such as corticosteroids. Your diet is the best source of calcium, but not everyone can tolerate milk products. Maybe you just don't like drinking milk.

Do men need to take calcium? It's true that osteoporosis is less common



in men than in women. This is because men start out with a higher peak bone density than women do. Also, men don't go through menopause, which accelerates bone loss in women. But bone density does decline in men as they age. After age 65, the rate of decline is the same in men as it is in women. By age 75, one-third of men have osteoporosis and are at increased risk of bone fractures. Calcium and vitamin D are essential for building peak bone mass when you're young and for preventing bone loss as you age. Clinical studies show that taking calcium and vitamin D supplements reduces

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the risk of hip and spine fractures. Men younger than age 65 should get 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium every day. Men age 65 and older should consume at least 1,500 mg of calcium daily. Men should also get 400 to 800 international units (IU) of vitamin D daily - but not more than 800 IU. If you don't get these amounts in your daily diet, consider taking calcium and vitamin D supplements.

Calcium carbonate: Found in popular multi-vitamin/ mineral brands and in products such as Tums, Rolaids and Caltrate. It is the most common calcium supplement and contains the most elemental calcium: 40%. It should be taken with food. It can be hard to digest and may cause gas.

Calcium citrate: the main component of this is Citrical, containing about half as much calcium as calcium carbonate but more easily absorbed and digested. Available in over the counter supplement form, this is a better choice for those who have absorption problems with the carbonate type. It doesn't need to be taken with food.

Calcium Phosphate: Often used as a supplement in orange juice, elemental calcium 31%. A one cup glass of calcium-fortified orange juice contains 300 milligrams of available calcium. Not as easily absorbed as calcium citrate.

Coral Calcium: Chemically similar to calcium carbonate, with a comparable level of available calcium. More expensive than conventional products.



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Lots of information can be found at the United Ostomy Association of America website.



UOAA's Main Website -
www.ostomy.org

UOAA Discussion Board -
www.uoaa.org/forum

Facebook: [Facebook.com/UOAA](https://www.facebook.com/UOAA)

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Phoenix Ostomy Magazine:
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Need Emergency Ostomy Help?



Bay Breeze RX is a proud sponsor of the Angel Closet in affiliation with the Clearwater Ostomy Support Group. The Closet offers free supplies for all types

of Ostomy and wound care. Bay Breeze also provides consultation services by appointment. These services are offered by Karen Burdewick BSN, RN, CWOCN at no charge.

Appointments can be made directly with Lila Jane at 727-744-2660. **Bay Breeze RX** is located at 3350 East Bay Drive. Largo, FL 33771. www.baybreezerx.com

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Get Ostomy Answers!

The Phoenix magazine provides answers to the many challenges of living with an ostomy. From skin care to nutrition to intimacy, in-depth articles are written by medical professionals, ostomy experts and experienced ostomates. Subscriptions directly fund the services of the United Ostomy Associations of America.

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