

WEBSITE ARTICLE - TOP TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH A UROSTOMY

The aim of this article is to give tips about day to day living with a urostomy. These tips are given from the personal experiences of people living with a urostomy themselves.

Urine samples

Sometimes it may not be convenient or practical to obtain a urine sample via a catheter directly from the stoma. However, there is one other way of obtaining a clean sample which is acceptable.

Remove your current pouch, ensuring that you clean your stoma with well with clear water. Then hold the clean receptacle under the stoma to catch the urine as it comes out (ensuring that the receptacle does not actually touch the stoma). Do ensure that it is noted with the sample that it is from a urostomy.

Bleeding around the stoma

Don't be surprised if a little blood appears when you clean your stoma. It is quite normal for the stoma to bleed slightly from the outside, due to the blood vessels being very superficial and easily damaged – this bleeding will stop after a few minutes. However, if you notice blood coming out of your stoma aperture, contact your GP or Stoma Care Nurse as soon as possible. The bleeding will probably be caused by a urinary tract infection and will easily be cleared up, but it must be investigated.

Diet

Most people with a urostomy can enjoy a completely normal diet. It is helpful to maintain an acidic urine pH, which helps to prevent infection. To assist this process cranberry juice or cranberry capsules and bio or live yoghurt are excellent. You should not take cranberry juice or capsules if you are taking warfarin. The top tip, however, is to drink lots of water. For further information, see the Urostomy Association leaflet "Active Living".

Night drainage systems

To avoid air in the night drainage system, connect the night bag to a pouch with a quantity of urine in it. Squeeze the urine through into the night bag and the body pouch should then remain empty overnight.

Top Tips

Waterproof mattress covers can be obtained from department stores, such as John Lewis, Debenhams or British Home Stores. Alternatively, smaller pads can be used, such as Kylies or Boots baby mattress protectors.

Reusable night drainage bags must be washed thoroughly after each use and changed after a maximum of one week. Vinegar or Dettol can be inserted using a syringe, small funnel or an empty washing up liquid bottle and then agitated and flushed through with warm water. It is also acceptable to use just water.

The simplest method of night drainage is to use disposable bags, which are emptied and destroyed each morning.

Flatpack night drainage stands, which can either be free-standing or slid between the mattress and the base of the bed, are ideal for travel. These are available from several of the stoma appliance manufacturers.

Place the night drainage stand in a plastic bowl or inside a large plastic bag (making sure that there aren't any holes in the bottom!) for extra security.

Travelling

Always keep a night drainage bag in your car to empty your pouch when held up in traffic. This may not be easy if you have a "push-in" type outlet. An alternative is to empty your stoma bag into one of the new pouches which contain a gel to solidify the urine.

To make seatbelts more comfortable over your stoma, you may like to use a device which is a hand-operated cam plate and allows the seatbelt to be locked in a comfortable position, but will release instantly when required. These are available from Safety Belt Services, The Old Mill House, Mill Lane, Keysoe, Bedford, MK44 2HN. Tel: 01234 709999. Email: info@safetybeltservices.co.uk. Website: www.seatbeltservices.co.uk.

Alternatively the Clippasafe Bump Belt, which costs around £20 and is available from some branches of Boots or online at www.clippasafe.co.uk. Alternatively use a spring type clothes peg. Top Tips

When flying on long journeys, if you are concerned that your pouch will overflow and you cannot easily access the aircraft's toilet, connect a night drainage bag concealed in a carrier bag, which can be discreetly emptied later.

Top Tips

Leaks

Most people with a urostomy will experience leakage at some time, however such incidence should be rare. It is recommended to carry a simple pack of spare items at all times. If leakage occurs with any frequency, something is wrong.

- The type of appliance used may not suit you
- An increase or decrease in weight can cause leakage issues
- Your stoma may have changed shape
- Your skin was not dried properly before application of the bag.

Talk to your Stoma Care Nurse as soon as possible.

Miscellaneous

- Warm your pouch against your body before applying.
- After fitting a new bag, give it a tug to ensure it is fitting correctly.
- Appliances with a bendy/fold-up tap can occasionally be hard to open and close. Rub a small amount of Vaseline around the bung to solve the problem.
- If using paste, or similar products, wet your finger to avoid it sticking during application.
- Sore places around your stoma can be healed quickly and easily with the many products available on prescription. If the problem persists you must seek the advice of your Stoma Care Nurse.
- To remove urine odour from carpets, beds or furniture after a leak, use either bicarbonate of soda, a powdered carpet cleaner, or an enzyme digester available from pet shops.

Spare equipment

If you have any spare stoma bags etc, which are no longer needed, please contact either of the following:

- Jacobs Well, tel: 01482 881162; email: office@thejacobswell.org; website: www.thejacobswell.org
- Cradle for Life International. Tel: 01708 760250; email: mhwain@gmail.com

If you are concerned about any aspect of your life with a stoma – just remember that help is only a telephone call away.

Top Tips

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