

Top tips for people with a urostomy

At the Urostomy Association, we understand what it means to live with a urostomy. We've put together some 'top tips' to help you with day-to-day living so you know how to deal with any blips before they occur.

Please note: This leaflet is for information only as the Urostomy Association does not give medical advice. If you are in need of medical advice, please contact your stoma care nurse, consultant or GP.

Diet

Happily, most people with a urostomy can enjoy a completely normal diet.

It's wise to maintain an acidic urine pH, which helps to prevent infection. Cranberry, which you can take as juice or in capsule form, may increase the acidity of your urine. However, some research studies argue that this does not do enough to either prevent or kill bacteria. (Never take cranberry if you are on warfarin or other blood-thinning medication.) The 'top tip' is to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids, with 1.5 to 2 litres being ideal.

For further information on diet, please see our Active Living leaflet.

Travelling

It can be useful to keep a night drainage bag in your car so you're well prepared for emptying your bag should you need to when held up in traffic. This might not be easy if you have a 'push in' outlet, so an alternative is to use an empty soft drink bottle.

To make seatbelts feel more comfortable over your stoma, you might want to use something to keep pressure off your tummy. There's a range of products available online, or you can contact us for more information.

Taking a long flight and concerned your pouch might overflow and

that you may not be able to quickly access the toilet onboard? Connect a night bag concealed in a carrier bag, which can be discreetly emptied later. Remember to drink plenty as air travel can be very dehydrating.

For further information to help you feel more confident when travelling, please see our Travel leaflet.

Urine samples

Sometimes, it may not be convenient or practical to obtain a urine sample via a catheter directly from your stoma. Don't worry though, there's another way of obtaining a clear sample that's acceptable. (If you provide a sample directly from your pouch, especially one you've been wearing for a while, it will be contaminated because urostomy bags are not sterile.)

- Firstly, remove your current pouch, ensuring that you clean your stoma well with clear water.
- Hold a clean receptacle under your stoma to catch the urine as it comes out, taking care not to touch your stoma with the receptacle.
- When you hand over your urine sample for testing, be sure it is noted that it comes from a urostomy. If you do not make this clear, the person carrying out the test will assume it is from your bladder because they won't have your notes to refer to.

Bleeding around your stoma

When you're cleaning your stoma, you might find that a little bit of blood appears. Please don't be alarmed by this because it's normal for a stoma to bleed slightly from the outside due to blood vessels being very superficial and easily damaged. This bleeding should stop after a few minutes.

If though, you notice blood coming out of the entrance to your stoma, contact your GP or stoma care nurse as soon as possible. This type of bleeding may be caused by a urinary tract infection (UTI), but it's important to get it checked and then treated if necessary.

Night drainage systems

A night drainage system can be attached to your pouch before you go to bed. This system then collects and stores urine. That way, you can sleep all night without getting up to empty the pouch.

Make sure the pouch is about a quarter full when you attach the drainage system to it at night. This will help get the urine flowing into the tubing from the pouch. To attach the system to your pouch:

- Place the night drainage container in a basin or a small bin on the floor next to your bed. This will keep it from tipping over during the night.
- Connect the tubing to the pouch.
- Open the closure on the pouch drain. This way, urine can flow through the tubing.
- Use a leg strap to keep the tubing next to your thigh. This will help keep the tubing or pouch from twisting.

Some people opt for a leg bag instead of a night bag because of the additional capacity they provide. These are available on prescription.

For travel, flatpack night drainage stands, which can be free standing or slid between the mattress and the bed, are ideal. These are available to buy from most stoma supply companies. For extra security, place the night drainage stand in a plastic bowl or inside a large plastic bag (making sure there are no holes in the bottom!).

In some cases, the need for night drainage bags can be eliminated entirely by using the U-drain system, which is plumbed into your house. Your stoma care nurse will be able to provide you with details on this.

Mattress covers

When leaks occur it's often at night, so it's worth buying a mattress protector, which you can get online or from department stores. Do ensure the description includes the word 'waterproof'. Our website has further information (search 'mattress'), or you can get in touch with us – please see our contact details below.

Managing leaks

Most of us with a urostomy experience leakage from time to time, but such incidences should be rare. It's sensible to carry a pack of spare items with you. If you're getting leaks frequently, it may be caused by...

- The appliance you're using not being suitable for you
- An increase or decrease in your weight
- Your stoma possibly changing shape
- Not drying your skin properly before applying the bag

Your stoma care nurse will be able to assess your situation and provide appropriate advice and support.

More top tips

- Warm your urostomy flange against your body before applying.
- After applying a new bag, give it a tug to make sure it's fitting correctly.
- If your appliance has a bendy fold-up tap that's occasionally difficult to open and close, try rubbing a little bit of Vaseline around the bung as this should help.
- If you use a paste, or similar product, wet your finger to avoid it sticking during application.

Spare stoma bags

If you have any spare stoma bags or other urostomy-related equipment, please consider donating them to a charity dedicated to sending medical supplies to countries where people can't easily access them. For a list of such charities, please get in touch with us.

Please remember...

If you are concerned about any aspect of your life with a stoma, the Urostomy Association is only a phone call away on 01368 430140.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if there's any further information you need.