Healthy eating and management of your ileostomy

This advice sheet has been written specifically for adults who have an ileostomy (small bowel stoma).

Whether your ileostomy is newly formed or well established, contact your Stoma Nurse if you have any concerns. If necessary you can be booked into a stoma clinic where your Stoma Nurse will be able to assess your stoma.

Please bring a spare ileostomy pouch to clinic with you.

If your ileostomy is newly formed

If you have recently had an ileostomy formed you will have follow-up appointments with your Stoma Nurse in a hospital-based clinic. It may take some time for your stoma output to settle down because your bowel is adjusting to the surgery. Your ileostomy will shrink in size over the first few weeks so will need to be measured at these follow-up appointments to ensure that the pouch is the correct size.

Your ileostomy supplies will be delivered once a month, in discreet packaging, by a delivery company to your home address, or you can choose to use your local pharmacy.

The ileostomy supplies are on prescription and you will be advised how to obtain them by your Stoma Nurse. If your ileostomy is permanent you will be asked to fill out a prescription exemption form.

Bleeding

You ileostomy has a good blood supply and may bleed easily, especially if your stoma is knocked or rubbed. This is normal and will heal.
Rectal discharge

If you have a stoma and your rectum and anus are still intact, you may experience discharge from your bottom. This is combination of mucus and dead skin cells from your remaining bowel. If you feel the urge to pass the mucus, sit on the toilet, but do not strain.

Healthy eating with an ileostomy

Healthy eating is important for everyone. It is important to keep your diet varied in order to promote a good appetite. If your ileostomy is newly formed you may have to avoid some foods initially, which can be reintroduced in moderation later on. Everyone’s tolerance to different foods varies and it is important to monitor your reactions to food and understand your tolerance.

The output from your ileostomy is liquid because it does not go through the colon (large bowel) where water and salt are reabsorbed into the body. It is therefore important for you to help your body reabsorb the water and salt by adjusting your diet.

The following information may help your stoma function at its best:

- Eat at regular times, avoid long gaps between meals
- Enjoy your meals in a relaxed environment
- Sit down, chew food well and take time over your meals
- Drink after you have eaten, not with your food
- Sprinkle a little salt on meals (1/2-1 tsp per day).
Foods that may cause your ileostomy to become blocked

Your ileostomy is made from the end of your small bowel which is smaller in diameter than your large bowel. This means that your ileostomy could become blocked with undigested foods. The best way to avoid blockages is to:

✓ Chew your food well

✓ Take time to eat slowly

✓ Avoid foods that more commonly cause blockages including sweetcorn, peas, beans, orange/grapefruit pith, mushrooms, pineapple, beansprouts, celery, fruit or vegetable skins and pips, raw vegetables, coconut, nuts and seeds, mango and dried fruit (including mince pies). Once your ileostomy has settled after surgery, some of these foods can be reintroduced in small quantities. If eaten, these foods should be chewed well and eaten in moderation.

Foods that may cause wind

If your ileostomy is newly formed then you may experience more wind than usual while your bowel recovers from the effects of surgery. Your ileostomy pouches are fitted with a charcoal filter designed to allow the wind to escape but neutralise the odour. The following tips may help reduce wind:

✓ Chew your food well

✓ Avoid talking while you are chewing food

✓ Eat at regular times, avoid long gaps between meals

✓ Reduce intake of foods which increase wind such as lentils, peas, beans, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, chewing gum, beer and fizzy drinks.
Foods that may cause odours/smells

There are some foods which may increase the smell from your output, so you may want to reduce your intake or avoid the following if they affect you:

✓ Onions, particularly raw
✓ Garlic
✓ Cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts
✓ Spicy foods
✓ Eggs
✓ Fish.

Foods that may cause your output to be loose

If you have noticed an increase in your stoma output and it has become loose, your body will lose more water and salt, increasing your risk of dehydration. It is therefore important you replace fluids lost by drinking water or dilute squash.

Adding salt to your meals will also help you replace any lost salts. To help reduce loose output the following tips may help:

✓ Reduce fruit and vegetable intake
✓ Limit alcohol intake
✓ Limit your caffeine intake
✓ Limit your intake of sweeteners such as those found in diet fizzy drinks, no-added sugar squash, sugar free sweets / chewing gum
✓ Reduce intake of high-fibre carbohydrates such as wholegrain cereal, bread, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, skins on potatoes
✓ Rehydrate with dilute squash rather than water.
Foods that may help thicken your output

Some foods may help to thicken your output including the following:

✓ Under-ripe bananas
✓ White rice, pasta, noodles and bread
✓ Low fibre breakfast cereals such as cornflakes and rice crispies
✓ Porridge
✓ Foods that contain gelatine e.g. marshmallows or jelly babies
✓ Semolina
✓ Apple sauce.

Fluids

It is recommended that you drink 1.5 - 2 litres of fluid per day to avoid becoming dehydrated.

Fluids that will help you avoid becoming dehydrated are:

✓ Dilute squash, rather than water
✓ Yeast extract drinks such as Bovril and Marmite
✓ Powdered soup
✓ Isotonic drinks

Please note that artificial sweeteners will cause loose output and should be drunk in moderation.
Medication to thicken your stool (loperamide)

Loperamide is one of a group of drugs called “anti-diarrhoeals”.

Sometimes it is necessary to use medication to thicken your stoma output. Loose stools are more likely to cause leakage around the seal of your stoma pouch, which can also make your surrounding skin sore.

Loperamide is a drug that can help to slow the passage of food through the small bowel. It will help your body to reabsorb fluid and nutrients, which will reduce the stoma output and thicken the stool.

Loperamide is also sold under the brand name “Imodium” and comes in capsules, tablets, melt formulation and syrup. Your GP may prescribe it for you if needed.

The ideal ileostomy output is a porridge-like consistency.

How to take loperamide

People vary in their response to loperamide so it may take some experimentation to find the most effective dose. It is recommended that you start with a low dose and build up if necessary. Talk to your stoma nurse who will advise you on the amount of loperamide that you should take.

You should not take more than 16mg (8 x 2mg capsules) per day unless you have been advised to do so by a medical professional. If you are advised to take larger quantities than this it is perfectly safe to do so, and will help prevent dehydration and stoma pouch leakage.

Loperamide should be taken half an hour before meals.

If it is in capsule form the capsule must be opened up and not taken whole.

The coating of the capsule prevents the loperamide being absorbed, so the medication is much less effective. The contents of the capsule can either be put
straight onto the tongue, or into a small quantity of water to drink. Please ensure that you also drink any remaining residue in the glass by adding more water.

Loperamide is effective 8-12 hours after it is taken, so it is advisable to make a note of when your ileostomy is most active. Your stoma nurse will then advise you when you should take loperamide.

Who should I contact if I have a problem or question?

Please call 01895 279391 (Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm) to speak with the Stoma Team.

What should I do in case of an emergency?

If your concern is urgent, please see your GP or ring NHS 111 for urgent medical advice.
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format.
Please contact:  01895 279973

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