

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) Diet. Most ostomates eat a normal diet with few modifications. They need to follow doctor's orders regarding nutrition at each stage of the adjustment: begin with small portions, introduce new foods slowly and chew well.

2) Clothing. Most individuals are able to wear their entire wardrobe, including tight clothing and bathing suits. Some may need to make minor adjustments.

3) Travel. All methods of travel can be undertaken with a little preplanning. Take extra pouching systems with you in carry-on luggage. Pack more than enough supplies in case you have to change more frequently than usual.

4) Activities. Most sports and occupations are open to ostomates. Swimming and scuba diving are two of the water sports enjoyed by ostomates.

5) Sex and Pregnancy. The ostomy itself is not a barrier to normal sexual activities and pregnancy.

6) Odor. Should not be a problem with the proper use of current products. Most pouches are odor-free. In addition, there are deodorants for external use and odor-reducing compounds to be taken by mouth, should they be needed.

Keep in mind these are the optimum results. There are exceptions and often challenges arise in each of these areas that have to be addressed with the specific individual's needs in mind.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Type of membership:

- Chapter (paid to chapter, call for pricing)
 Association (\$25.00) Professional (\$50.00)

Name _____

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To help us complete our records, please answer the following. Check all that apply.

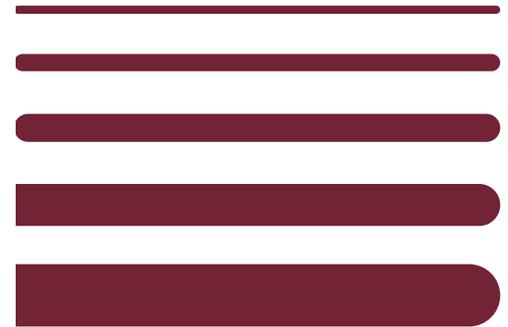
- Ileostomy Continent Ileostomy
 Urostomy Continent Urostomy
 Colostomy Pull-Through
 Other Continent Procedure
 Parent of Child with Ostomy
 Spouse/Family Member
 Medical Professional (Physician, RN, etc.)
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Please send completed application with payment to the address below. To use Visa, MasterCard or Discover, please call our toll-free number.



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SPOUSE AND FAMILY SUPPORT FOR OSTOMATES



The UOA is a volunteer-based health organization dedicated to providing education, information, support and advocacy for people who have or will have intestinal or urinary diversions.

INTRODUCTION

The spouse of a person with an ostomy plays a vital role in the rehabilitation process. It is important to understand basic ostomy information and the psychological impact of the procedure. Spouses may experience feelings of grief, guilt and anger. These feelings are perfectly normal and will lessen in time as both parties adjust to the ostomy.

You are not alone. There are many others who have experienced the same emotions and adjustments. It is estimated that nearly 750,000 people of all ages, races, backgrounds and occupations are living full, productive lives after having ostomy or continent diversion surgery.

You may have a lot of questions: Can we still eat out, travel, participate in sports and live a normal life? The answer is yes, but remember everyone responds to ostomy surgery differently, so evaluate your situation accordingly.

BASIC OSTOMY INFORMATION

Ostomy surgery is performed when a person has lost the normal function of their bowel or bladder because of birth defects, injury or disease. Ostomy surgery can have positive results for colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's. Surgery also enables some children with birth defects to live more normal lives.

Bowel diversions include: colostomy (a portion of large intestine is removed or bypassed), ileostomy (all of the large intestine is removed or bypassed) and continent diversions (an internal reservoir such as a J-pouch or continent ileostomy is constructed).

Bladder diversions include: urostomy (bladder is removed or bypassed), continent urostomy and orthotopic neobladder (an internal reservoir is constructed for both).

ROLE OF SPOUSE

Your role as a spouse is one of support and encouragement. These elements are vital to any relationship and provide a basis for an emotional recovery and acceptance of the ostomy. This life-saving, body-altering procedure can affect people in different ways.

How you react to the physical changes from surgery will be conveyed to the ostomate in many ways. Watch your body language. If you were a person who liked to cuddle before the surgery, then continue to reach out to your spouse. Couples have a tendency to "protect" each other and not be truthful about their feelings. Initiate open communications with your spouse and discuss any concerns either of you may have about the surgery (i.e., fear, anger, resentment, relief). Ask questions about changes you do not understand.

It is likely that you and your spouse may have anxieties about becoming intimate. Talk to your spouse about any physical limitations, pain (if present), fears about being naked, leakage, odor and rejection. Body image is one of the major issues after ostomy surgery.

A good sense of humor is an important factor that will be very beneficial during the adjustment phase. It helps you and your spouse deal with some of the unexpected events during this time.

Ostomates should have instructions about self-care from an ostomy nurse prior to leaving the hospital. Be supportive in providing assistance in caring for the ostomy but remember it is their ostomy! If the ostomy patient is physically capable, do not take on the role of total caregiver. Encourage independence in taking care of the ostomy, it can be the first step toward regaining self-esteem.

EDUCATION

Educate yourself about the services available to you and your spouse. The primary sources of information should be your physician, ostomy nurse or other healthcare professionals. The United Ostomy Association offers valuable resources and support for ostomates nationwide:

- A visit from a certified ostomy visitor can be arranged before or after surgery. In many cases, a "Spouse Visitor" can also be arranged. They can provide a positive role model for the new ostomate and their spouse. This face-to-face support can alleviate many fears.
- Attend a local support group meeting with your spouse. This will demonstrate your willingness to help them adjust to the challenges they are facing. Call 800-826-0826 for the chapter nearest you.
- The UOA has many brochures and patient care guides which are excellent resources for more in-depth information. Call 800-826-0826 or visit www.uoa.org for more information.
- National and regional conferences offer special sessions for spouses conducted by spouses.
- The message board on the UOA Web site is a forum for the exchange of information where you can post questions. Visit www.uoa.org.

REMEMBER...

The person with an ostomy has not changed, only their anatomy has. How you and your spouse accept that change will influence your quality of life. Armed with adequate information and a positive outlook, you may find that having a family member who has survived body-altering surgery often leads the entire family to a greater appreciation of life.