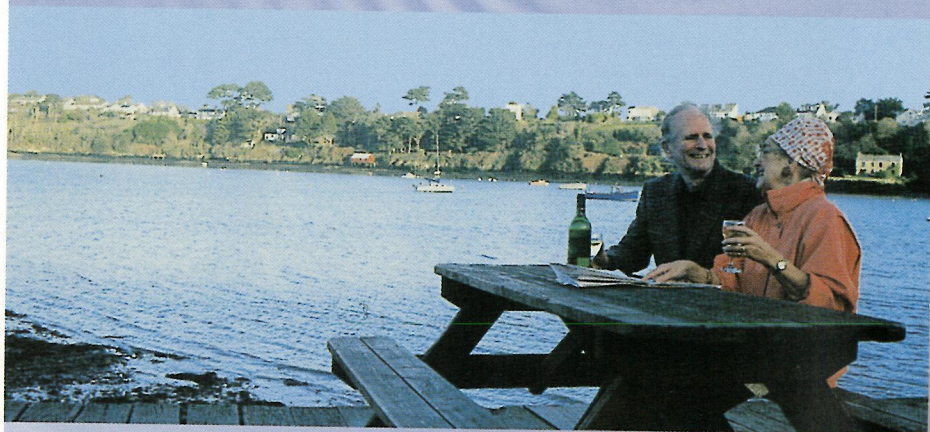


Your colostomy  
operation...  
...and afterwards



**Coloplast**

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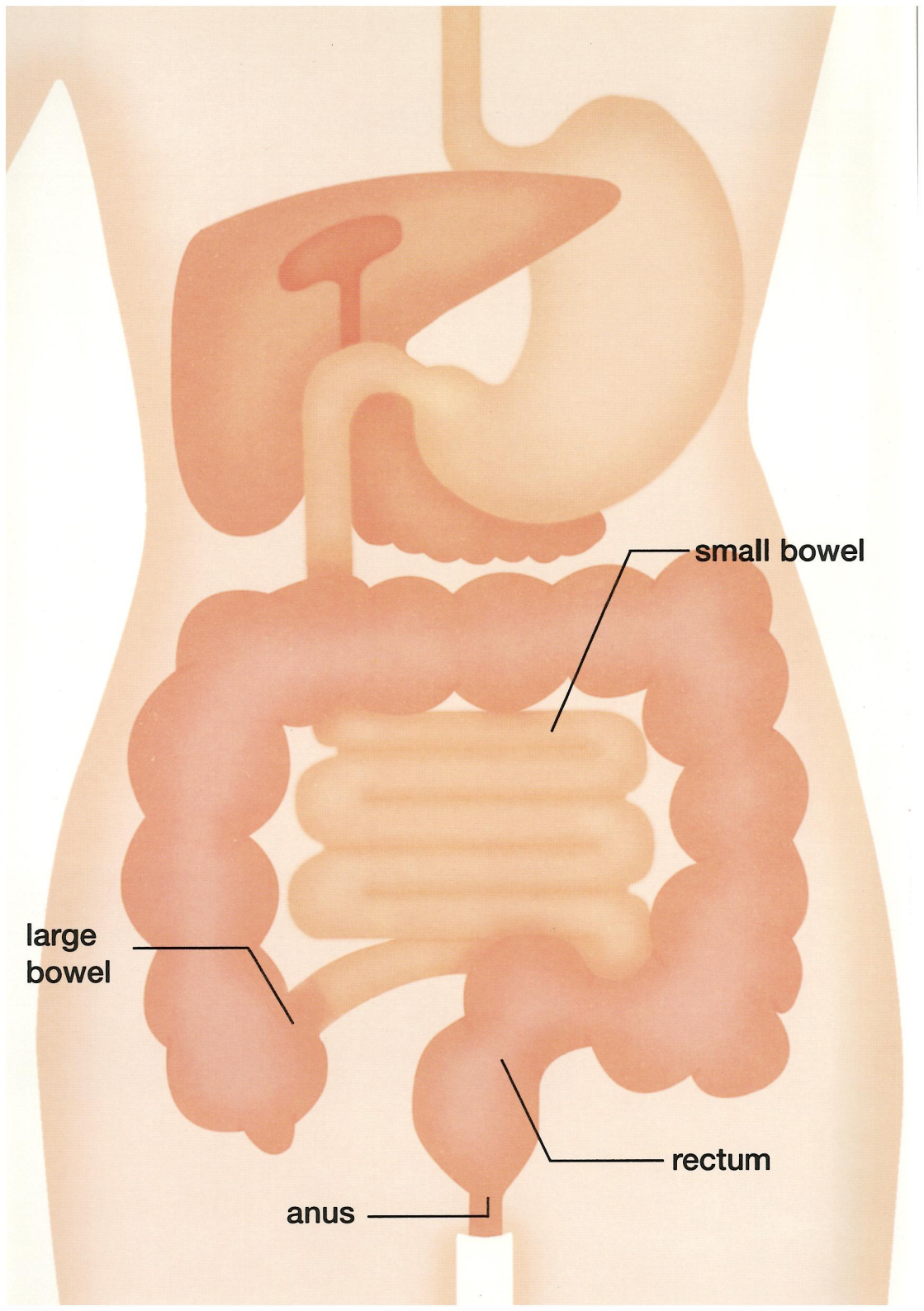
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# Colostomy Introduction

Your specialist care team, which includes the surgeon, the stoma care nurse and many other healthcare professionals is there to help you, your family and carers both before and after the operation, in hospital and when you go home.

The aim of this booklet is to help explain some of the issues concerned with having a colostomy - but inevitably there will be some issues that it does not address or you would like more information about. The members of your specialist care team will be able to give you the help you need.





small bowel

large bowel

rectum

anus

## Before your operation

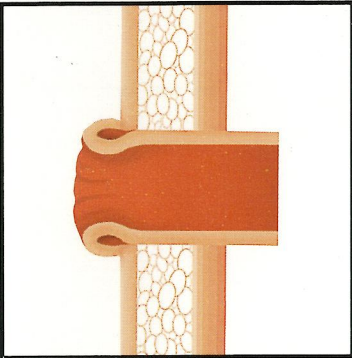
To help you understand what is involved in your operation, we should first look at the digestive system and how it works.

When you eat, food passes down the oesophagus to the stomach where the digestive juices begin to liquidise it before it is passed to the small bowel (or ileum). Here, more digestive juices are secreted so that your body can begin absorbing the nutrients it needs. The remaining food then passes through to the large bowel (or colon), where water is reabsorbed, leaving the solid waste matter (or faeces). This is then passed through to the rectum, where, with the aid of the sphincter muscles, it leaves the body through the anus.

## What is a colostomy?

During the operation the end of the shortened colon is brought to the surface of the abdomen to form the stoma, usually on the left hand side. This is where the faeces will now pass from the body. The stoma is moist, pinky red in colour, and protrudes slightly from the abdomen.

Despite being red, there is very little sensation in the stoma and it is not painful. Unlike your back passage, there is no sphincter muscle around the stoma, therefore you will have no control over your bowels and you will need to wear a bag to collect the faeces.



**Cross section of stoma**

## The operation

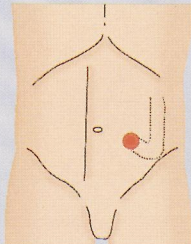
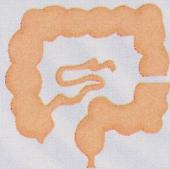
A colostomy may be performed for a number of reasons and your surgeon or stoma care nurse will explain the type of surgery you will be having.

A colostomy may be permanent or temporary.

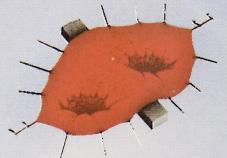
### End colostomy



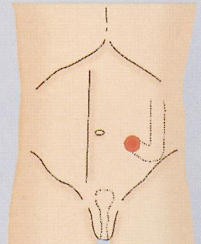
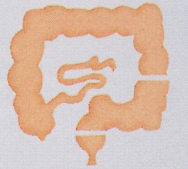
### Abdominoperineal resection



### Loop colostomy



### Hartmann's procedure





## **How can your stoma care nurse help?**

The stoma care nurse is a qualified nurse with special additional training in all aspects of stoma care who will be able to help you and your family before, during and after your operation.

The stoma care nurse, with the help of many other healthcare professionals, will provide you with as much help as you need, for as long as you need it - not only when you are in hospital but also when you have gone home.

## **Just after your operation**

A colostomy is a major operation so it's not surprising that you will feel weak afterwards. However, with the appropriate use of modern pain-killers you should not expect to experience any more than a mild level of discomfort.

When you wake up after the operation you will be wearing your first bag. This will probably be a clear one so that your nurses will be able to check on your new stoma easily.

You will also find that you will have drips in your arm, a tube up your nose and a drain in your abdomen - these are all perfectly routine. For the first few days you will be fed with fluids only and gradually these will be increased and light foods added until you will be eating normally.

After a few days your stoma will begin to work and at first the output may be a little watery. It will become less liquid as you resume a more balanced diet. It is also likely that a certain amount of wind (or flatus) will come from the stoma - again this is perfectly normal, so don't worry about it.



Your stoma care nurse is there to help you always, but particularly in these early days, so please ask about anything that may be bothering you - you can be sure that your concerns will have been raised before. Please ask any questions about looking after your stoma and changing your bag.

## **Learning to care for yourself... ...and your stoma**

Your stoma care nurse will help to teach you to look after your stoma and change your bag - but it really is quite simple when you get used to it.

## **Looking after your stoma**

One of the most important things to remember is to take good care of the skin around the stoma. If the bag does not fit as snugly around the stoma as it should then the skin becomes exposed to the harmful effects of the faeces. Leakage, as well as the too frequent removal of the bag and the use of harsh skin cleansers can also cause some irritation of the skin. Over-enthusiastic cleaning can lead to some slight bleeding from around the stoma, but this is not a cause for alarm. However, if bleeding comes from inside the stoma you should see your doctor urgently.

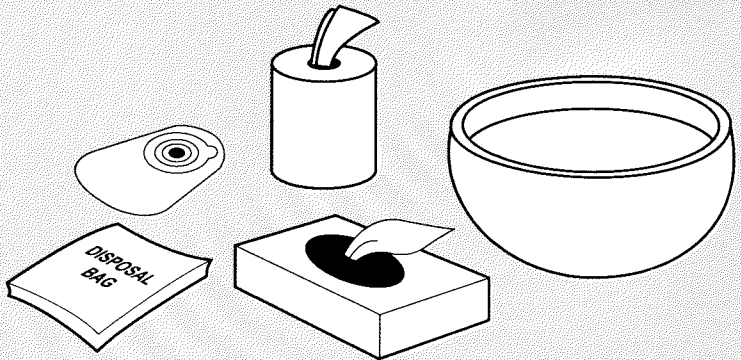
The use of soft cleaning wipes will help to avoid this sort of surface bleeding. You may be able to obtain these wipes from your local pharmacy.

Even though the rectum has been removed it is not uncommon for patients to experience the desire to defaecate. This is normal and should ease with time. If the back passage is still present there may be some mucus discharge from it. Again this is normal.

## Changing the bag

It is a good idea to begin to establish a routine for changing the bag. As you get used to your stoma you will find that at certain times of the day it is more active than others - such as shortly after a meal. Don't choose this time to change the bag but select a time when it is relatively inactive - perhaps first thing in the morning. Before starting to change the bag make sure you have everything to hand that you will need to complete the process. Just like everything else in life, a little bit of forward planning can help a lot. Here is a simple guide to the changing routine:

## Equipment needed



- Check you have everything you need:- toilet tissue, soft wipes, warm water, a new pouch and a plastic disposal bag.
- If you are using a drainable bag remove the clip at the bottom and drain the contents into the toilet **before** removing it. To do this you can sit well back on the toilet seat, although some people find it easier to kneel or bend over the toilet.
- Now remove the old bag, working slowly and gently from the top to the bottom.
- If you are using a closed bag cut the bottom off and empty the contents down the toilet. Don't put the bag down the toilet.
- Wash the stoma and surrounding skin with the warm water and tissues.
- Use the soft wipes to dry the area. Don't use harsh solvents, soaps or disinfectants.
- Fit the new bag, making sure that it is secure all the way around.

Periodically, when changing your bag, check the size of the stoma with the guide provided with your bags to make sure that you are still using the correct size.

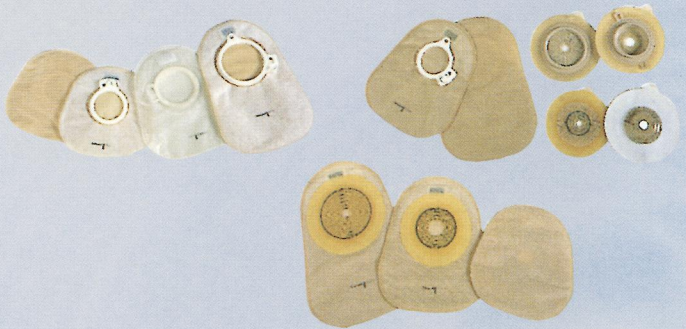
### **Disposal of used bags**

Once it has been emptied and removed, the bag should be sealed inside a plastic bag and put in the dustbin. Don't try to flush it down the toilet as it will cause a blockage.

Some local authorities provide a collection service for used bags. Your stoma care nurse will be able to tell you more about this.

## What sort of bag should I choose?

Most people with a colostomy use a closed bag, however if the output from the stoma is particularly liquid a drainable bag may be more appropriate. There are many different sorts of closed and drainable bags available and your stoma care nurse will be able to help you choose the most appropriate type for you. For example you may wish to move away from the clear bag fitted immediately after your operation to an opaque version.



There are two main sorts of bag, and they are known as the One Piece and Two Piece Systems.

A One Piece System comprises one simple unit which is made up of the collection bag and the adhesive ring which firmly attaches the bag around your stoma. A Two Piece System has the collection bag separate from the adhesive ring and the two halves are securely clipped together. This means that you do not have to remove the adhesive ring from around the stoma every time you change the bag.

Both types will be kind to your skin, lightweight, leakproof and odourproof which means that they will be virtually undetectable to anyone else. Bags are available in a variety of sizes to suit your specific needs. Closed bags are fitted with filters which deodorize the flatus as it passes out of the bag.

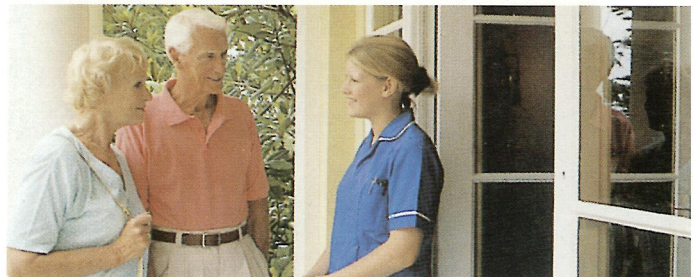
Some people with colostomies choose to irrigate (or wash out) their stoma to give them more control over the output. Your stoma care nurse will be able to advise you about this.

## **Going home**

When you go home there is no reason why, with time, you will not be able to resume the life you were leading before the operation. Here is some specific advice that you may find helpful.

## **Obtaining supplies**

On leaving hospital your stoma care nurse will provide you with enough bags and other necessary bits and pieces to keep you going until your own supply is sorted out. You may also be given a card, listing all the things you will need, which you should take to your doctor. Your doctor will write a prescription which you should take to your local chemist or specialist supplier-who will provide the products for you - you won't have to pay a prescription charge. In order to be sure that you are exempt from prescription charges ask for form P11 at your local Post Office or doctor's surgery.

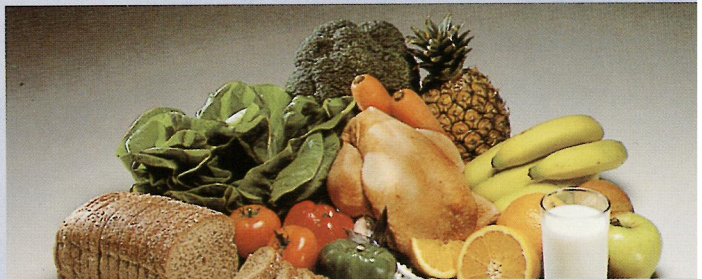


Be careful not to store your bags in direct sunlight or near heat as this may make them deteriorate.

## Diet

Just like everyone else, you should eat a well balanced diet, and this can include all of your favourite foods. You will find that certain foods produce more wind than others (just like everyone else), and if this bothers you then simply cut down on these foods. Alcohol is fine in moderation, but beer and lager can produce wind and cause the output from the stoma to become more liquid. With a little experimentation you will soon find a balanced diet that's right for you.

It is important for someone with a colostomy to remember to chew their food properly in order to give a good start to the digestive process.



Just like anyone else you can pick up a stomach bug which can give you diarrhoea. If this happens, treat the condition exactly the same as before, and remember to take plenty of fluids - you might like to try one of the widely available 'energy drinks'.

Coloplast have produced a booklet dealing with diet and exercise for people with a stoma and if you would like a copy simply write to the FREEPOST address at the back of this booklet.

## Travel

There is no reason why having a colostomy should restrict your ability to travel in any significant way - whether in the UK or abroad, for business or pleasure. Just remember to pack all the things you will need for the journey and to make sure that you have enough supplies for the duration of your time away.

Your stoma care nurse will be able to answer any specific questions but Coloplast have produced a booklet dealing with travel issues of particular relevance to people with a stoma. If you would like a copy simply write to the FREEPOST address at the back of this booklet.



## Exercise

Exercise is good for everyone and just because you have had a colostomy you are no exception. It is very likely that any exercise you enjoyed before the operation will also be suitable for continuation afterwards. Special small bags are available for use when swimming and playing sport so there is no reason to feel excluded from participating. Obviously you will need to start with gentle exercise at first but you will soon feel able to do just as much, if not more, than before.

Coloplast have produced a booklet dealing with exercise and diet for people with a stoma and if you would like a copy simply write to the FREEPOST address at the back of this booklet.



## What about sex?

This very much depends on the nature of the operation you have had. In most cases a normal loving relationship can be resumed although impotence may result from removal of the rectum. It is important to talk to your partner and not to feel self-conscious because of the operation. It is also important to talk to your stoma care nurse who is used to discussing such delicate issues and will be able to help in many ways.



## Continuing care

The objective of having an colostomy is to get you back to enjoying life and that means that you are at home, or at work, or on holiday - not in hospital - and not 'ill'. But this does not mean that your specialist care team has washed its hands of you once you walk out of the hospital gates - quite the opposite. Your stoma care nurse, and colleagues, are always on hand to help you with any problems or questions that you might have.



## **Other sources of help and advice**

The British Colostomy Association is a nationwide organisation whose aim is to give information, advice and support to anyone who has, or is about to have a colostomy. They have an experienced team of visitors throughout the country, all of whom have colostomies themselves. You can also phone at any time if you need someone to talk to.

**British Colostomy Association, 15 Station Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1LG. Tel: (0800) 3284257.**

**Website address: [www.bcass.org.uk](http://www.bcass.org.uk)**

**The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease  
4 Beaumont House, Sutton Road, St Albans,  
Herts. AL1 5HH. Tel: (01727) 844296 or (01992) 463452.**

## **Coloplast Customer Care Department**

Our experienced team, including qualified nurses, is on hand to answer your queries. They will be able to tell you who is your local stoma care nurse, if you do not already know.

**FREEPHONE on 0800 220622 (Eire: 1-800-409502)**

Calls are answered personally from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours simply leave your name and telephone number and we will get back to you. All calls are treated in the strictest confidence.

Coloplast would like to thank the following stoma care nurses for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this booklet:

Yvette Perston, Llandough	Jill Dean, Sheffield
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Jan Day, Chichester	Bridget Owles, Bournemouth

If you would like to know more about the Coloplast range of colostomy products, or would like free copies of the Healthy Living and Travel booklets, simply complete and return this reply-paid card. No stamp is needed.

If you prefer you can put the card in an envelope and use the freepost address on the back of this booklet.

Please send me a copy of the:

**Healthy Living booklet**

**Travel booklet**

(Please tick)

**Stoma size:**

**Name of bag currently used:**

.....  
**One piece**  **Two piece**

(Please tick)

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Signature:



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