

Managing a prolapsed stoma

A prolapsed stoma can be alarming and distressing. However, as Maria Brown explains, prolapses can be managed with some simple techniques

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A prolapse is one of the possible complications that might arise with a stoma. It occurs when a length of bowel prolapses - slips through - the incision in your abdomen to the exterior. It is more common in a transverse loop colostomy; however, it can happen with any stoma. There are many reasons why a prolapse happens - anything from the abdominal incision being too large to overexertion and even excessive coughing.

A prolapse is not serious, as long as the stoma stays pink and healthy, and continues to function. It can usually be reduced by an experienced practitioner, and is likely to reduce when you are lying flat for an extended period of time. First thing in the morning, the prolapse may be small; however, during the day it may extend into your stoma pouch/appliance.

Coping with a prolapse

After coping for many years with a stoma, having a prolapse occur can be devastating. If no surgical intervention is possible, then it is important that you receive advice and support to help you cope with the prolapse at home.

Communication with the stoma specialist team is important in dealing with the prolapse; they will provide much needed physiological and psychological support and advice on coping with this new complication. Fear of further prolapse and an altered body image are worrying and quite frightening.

Key points

- A prolapse of a stoma is when a section of bowel slips through to the outside of the abdomen.
- As long as the bowel remains healthy and the stoma continues to function, a prolapse is not necessarily a serious problem.
- There are various techniques to 'treat' a prolapse and minimise the difficulties that might arise.
- Your stoma appliance can be changed to accommodate a prolapsed stoma.



A prolapsed stoma - the bowel is still healthy and the stoma still functioning

When you first notice that your stoma has enlarged, don't panic; get in touch with your stoma nurse and explain what is happening. They will advise you and make an appointment for you to come in and see them.

If the prolapse is small, then the template of your appliance's baseplate may just need to be altered. Larger appliances are available to accommodate the prolapsed bowel. However, any change in your bowel habit, discolouration of the stoma or further prolapse should be reported to your stoma team.

Reduction of a prolapse

The stoma team will give advice on the reduction of the prolapse. Techniques include:

- Applying cold compresses to the stoma
- Wrapping ice in a tea towel and applying it over the stoma
- Lying flat
- Changing the appliance first thing in the morning
- Using a larger appliance to accommodate the prolapsed stoma and the output.

The template of your product's baseplate will be checked to make sure the hole is not causing trauma to the prolapsed bowel. The use of a hernia support girdle may be advised to help with the support of your abdominal muscles and to even out your shape. There are many companies on the market providing these; your stoma nurse will help you choose the most suitable ■