

Introduction

Adjusting to life with an ostomy takes time. The process is easier if you have education and support as well as the right ostomy products for your needs. Appropriate products can help prevent some of the most common challenges faced by people with ostomies. Problems such as leakage and skin irritation are more easily prevented if you have an appropriate and well-fitting ostomy pouching system.

Sometimes, despite proper ostomy care and products, problems develop involving the stoma or the skin around it. This sheet was designed to help you learn more about some of these problems and provide some suggestions about how to manage them. This information is intended to support the information you receive from your nurse or doctor. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about any problems that occur with your stoma or skin.

Healthy Stoma and Peristomal Skin (Figure 1)

While stomas come in a variety of sizes and shapes, the healthy stoma is pink or red in color and slightly moist. A stoma bleeds easily when rubbed or bumped (for example, when washing). This minor bleeding should resolve quickly.

The skin around the stoma (peristomal) should be intact without irritation, rash or redness. A properly fitting skin barrier protects the skin from being irritated or damaged by the stoma drainage. It doesn't really matter whether your stoma is large or small or whether it protrudes or not, as long as the drainage can come out of the stoma and go into your pouch without leaking under the skin barrier.



Figure 1

Skin Irritation

If the skin around your stoma is damaged, it will look irritated and feel sore. Skin damage around a stoma can be hard to manage because you need to place the ostomy pouching system over the irritated area. The most important part of dealing with skin problems is to learn what caused the irritation. Below are some of the things that can create irritated skin.

Improperly Fitting Skin Barrier (Figure 2)

If the opening on your pouching system is too large or does not adhere well, the drainage from the stoma can damage the skin. This is a particular risk in people who have an ileostomy.

Suggestions:

- Measure your stoma size periodically
- Select a product that fits closely around your stoma
- Apply Premium powder to any open skin before applying your new pouching system
- Discontinue use of Premium powder after the skin has healed
- Contact your ET or WOC Nurse if the skin does not improve



Figure 2

Skin Irritation Due to Leakage (Figure 3)

Stoma discharge can be irritating to the skin, causing redness that can progress to open raw skin that weeps or even bleeds. This type of irritation is often very painful. People with ileostomies are at the highest risk. However, for anyone, a change in your stoma or the shape of your abdomen can make your pouching system not fit as well as it used to, leading to leakage.

Suggestions:

- Change your pouch promptly if drainage is leaking under the skin barrier
- Change your pouch on a regular schedule before it leaks
- Contact your ET or WOC Nurse if you are having difficulty keeping your pouch on
- Consider use of accessories (convex skin barrier, paste, barrier rings) to help prevent leakage under the skin barrier



Figure 3

Skin Irritation under Tape (Figure 4)

Irritated skin that develops only under the tape of your ostomy pouching system can occur for a variety of reasons. You may be sensitive to an ingredient in the tape or your skin may have become damaged from tape removal. The skin may be itchy, blistered or open and weeping. This problem can develop at any time even if you have worn the same type of product for months or years.

Suggestions:

- Try a pouching system without tape. These products are adhesive but use a skin barrier instead of tape
- Apply Premium powder to any open skin before applying your new pouching system
- Contact your ET or WOC Nurse if you are having difficulty keeping your pouch on



Figure 4

Rash under Ostomy Product (Figure 5)

Sometimes a rash is caused by a skin infection or sensitivity or even leakage. The area may be red or red with bumps. Itching may also be a symptom. It is important to get assistance in determining the cause since the suggestions for treatment will vary.

Suggestions:

- Contact your ET or WOC Nurse if you are having difficulty keeping your pouch on
- If an antifungal is recommended for treatment, make sure it is in a powder form, not a cream

Remember:

Don't ignore skin problems around your stoma.

Do seek help for skin irritation or pouch leakage.

Don't use home remedies.

Do call for samples if you need to try something new.



Figure 5



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For more information:

WOC Nurses specialize in the care of people with ostomies. If you need help locating an ostomy nurse in your area, contact: Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses Society (WOCN) 1.888.224.9626

For product related questions or concerns, contact Hollister Incorporated at 1.800.323.4060

For product questions, sampling needs, or detailed clinical questions concerning our products in the US call **1.888.740.8999**. In Canada call **1.800.263.7400**.