



ConvaTec

Living with confidence after

# colostomy surgery



## Learning to Live with an Ostomy

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It's normal to be concerned about living your life with an ostomy. You are not alone. There are over half a million people in North America living with an ostomy who have active, happy, healthy lives.

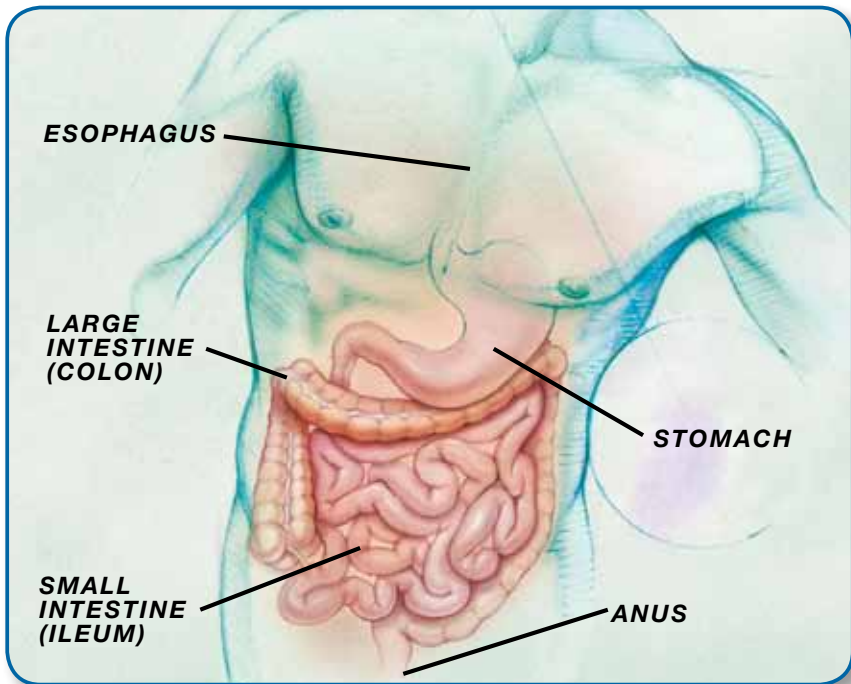
Once you're back home, we recognize you will have questions and concerns about your surgery, your ostomy and your lifestyle. At ConvaTec, we understand your concerns and are here to help. For over 30 years we have been developing products and services to help improve the lives of people living with an ostomy. This booklet will help answer some of your questions and concerns and provide you with helpful information and resources as you adjust to living with your ostomy.

*Rick – Ostomy surgery in 2008*



## Your Digestive System

- When you chew your food, digestion is started. Chewed food then passes through the esophagus and is further broken down in the stomach.
- Partially digested food moves into the small bowel (also called the ileum) where water and nutrients are absorbed.
- The remaining undigested food moves into the large bowel (also called the colon) where water is absorbed and stool is formed and stored until you feel the urge to go to the bathroom.

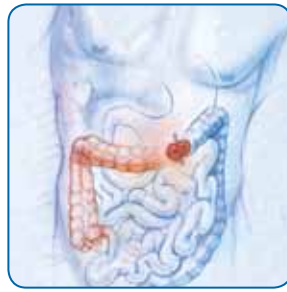


## Your Colostomy Surgery

- A colostomy is an opening made on your belly through which the large bowel is redirected and brought up to the surface of the skin.
- This new opening is called a stoma. It allows waste to pass out of the body and empty into a pouching system placed over the stoma. The pouching system consists of a skin barrier and a pouch. The skin barrier sticks to the skin on your belly.
- Before surgery, you felt the urge to go to the bathroom and you could control when to go. After surgery you will not feel the urge to go or have control over the stool which flows out of the stoma.
- Depending on the location of the colostomy stoma within the colon, the consistency of your stool may range from loose and liquid to hard and formed.



Ascending Colostomy



Transverse Colostomy



Descending Colostomy



Sigmoid Colostomy

## Your Stoma

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- The skin around your stoma (called the peristomal skin) should look and feel like the rest of the skin on your belly.
- Your stoma should be shiny, wet and red, much like the inside of your mouth.
- Stomas vary in size and shape from person to person.
- After surgery your stoma will be swollen. The swelling will go down in time and your stoma will get smaller.
- A stoma is not sensitive to the touch but may bleed slightly if irritated or rubbed. This bleeding is normal but if it continues or if you see blood in your stool, contact your doctor.
- It is important to keep stool off your skin to help prevent skin irritation.



Colostomy Stoma

# Pouching Systems

A pouching system is made up of a skin barrier and a pouch and is available as a one- or two-piece system.

## Skin barrier

- Has an opening for your stoma.
- Sticks to the skin around the stoma to protect it from stool.
- Holds the pouch in place.



## Pouch

- Attaches to the skin barrier to collect the stool that comes out of your stoma.
- Made of clear or colored soft, plastic-like material.



## One-Piece Pouching System

- The skin barrier and pouch are made as one piece.
- The whole system is removed and replaced each time it is changed.



## Two-Piece Pouching System

- The skin barrier and pouch are two separate pieces you put together.
- The pouch can be removed and replaced when you want to change it without removing the skin barrier from your belly.



## Pouches can be Drainable or Closed-End:

### Drainable System

- A drainable pouching system has an opening at the bottom so it can be emptied or drained.



### Closed-End System

- A closed-end pouching system does not have an opening and is thrown away when used and replaced with a new one.



## Ordering Supplies and Insurance Reimbursement

- Ostomy supplies are special products and may not be available at your local drugstore.
- Contact your insurance provider to understand:
  - What your insurance plan covers and pays for ostomy supplies.
  - Where you can purchase and order supplies (usually through a supplier or retailer)
- ConvaTec ostomy nurses can help you find a local retailer or online supplier.  
**Call 1-800-422-8811.**

**Medicare coverage can be confusing; the chart below can help. The usual maximum quantity of pouches or skin barriers that Medicare covers per month is as follows:**

Products	Quantity per month
Drainable pouches.....	up to 20
Skin barrier paste.....	4 oz. tube
Skin Barrier with flange .....	up to 20
Protective Skin Barrier Wipes.....	3 boxes of 50 wipes every 6 months
Ostomy Belt .....	1

No maximum quantity limits have been established for extended wear skin barriers, including Eakin Cohesive® Seals, or adhesive remover wipes.

\*The reimbursement information provided by ConvaTec is intended to provide general information relevant to coding and reimbursement of ConvaTec's products only. Coverage and payment policies for the same insurer can vary from one region to another and may change from time to time because of ongoing changes in government and insurance industry rules and regulations. Therefore, please confirm HCPCS Codes with your local DME-MAC, private insurer, or Medicaid agency before processing claims. ConvaTec does not guarantee coverage or payment of its products listed herein.



## Everyday Ostomy Care

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- The skin around your stoma should look like the rest of the skin on your belly.
- Keep your stoma and the skin around it clean and protect the skin around your stoma from coming in contact with stool.
- Clean the skin around your stoma with warm water.
- Water does not hurt your stoma.
- Do not use any kind of soap, body wash, cleaner, or creams on the skin around the stoma. Oils, perfumes and moisturizers can irritate the stoma and skin and make it harder for the pouching system to stick to your body.
- Pat the skin around the stoma dry after you clean with warm water.
- A slight redness from removing the skin barrier is normal but should fade quickly back to your normal skin color.



- If you feel burning, itching, or if stool leaks under your skin barrier, do not 'patch' the skin barrier with extra tape. Remove the skin barrier, clean the area and replace with a new skin barrier. If the skin around your stoma gets red or irritated, contact your doctor or ostomy nurse.
- After surgery and when your doctor says it's okay, you can take a shower or bath, with or without wearing your pouching system.
- If you wear your pouching system to bathe, you may choose to dry the skin under the pouch using a blow dryer on a medium setting for about one minute.
- Foods and medications can change the color, consistency and odor of your stool. If you notice any changes, contact your doctor or ostomy nurse.

*Cricket – Ostomy surgery 1994*



## Using Your Pouching System

- Your ostomy nurse may give you a detailed, step-by-step instruction guide on how to use your pouching system. You can keep that guide in the back pocket of this pamphlet.
- How you change your pouching system depends on the type of system you are using.
- **Here are some basic steps to empty or change a pouching system:**
  - 1) Gather your supplies.
  - 2) Remove the pouching system you are wearing.
  - 3) Cleanse the area with warm water.
  - 4) Gently dry the skin around the stoma.
- **To empty a drainable pouch:**
  - 1) Open the bottom of the pouch and empty stool into the toilet.
  - 2) Wipe off the end of the pouch with toilet paper.
  - 3) Close and secure the opening of the pouch.
  - 4) Reattach the pouch if you're using a two-piece pouching system.
- **To change a drainable pouch:**
  - 1) Remove the pouch. If you are using a two-piece system, carefully support the skin barrier.
  - 2) Seal the pouch in a plastic baggie then put it in a second baggie.
  - 3) Throw the bag away in a trash bin (never try to flush a pouch in the toilet).
  - 4) Attach a new pouch.

- **To change a closed-end/non-drainable pouch:**

- 1) Remove the pouch. If you are using a two-piece system, carefully support the skin barrier.
- 2) Seal the pouch in a plastic baggie then put it in a second baggie.
- 3) Throw the bag away in a trash bin (never try to flush a pouch in the toilet).
- 4) Attach a new pouch.

- Many pouches have filters that help keep the pouch from ‘ballooning’ when it fills with gas.
- The filter also helps reduce odor.
- You may need to cover the filter when swimming or showering, read the product directions for details.

*George – Ostomy surgery in 2006*



## Living Your Life

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Having a colostomy will not stop you from living an active life. You can exercise, go out for meals, travel and spend time with friends and family.

After you've healed from the surgery you can begin to enjoy the physical and social activities you enjoyed before your illness and surgery.

### **Work and Physical Activity**

- Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work, begin playing sports and doing other physical activities.
- If your job involves heavy lifting or other strenuous labor, talk to your doctor or ostomy nurse.
- You can go swimming while wearing your pouching system.

### **Sexual Activity**

- If you or your partner have concerns about having sex, be open and honest with each other. You can also talk to your doctor or ostomy nurse.
- Sexual activity will not hurt you or your stoma.
- Empty your pouch before having sex.
- You may want to try special underwear, lingerie or pouch covers that are available.
- Do not put anything in your stoma during sex.

*Bill – Ostomy surgery in 1966*

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## Eating and Drinking

- You don't need to be on a special diet just because you have a colostomy.
- After your recovery, gradually begin eating a balanced diet unless your doctor gives you special instructions.
- Most foods, if chewed well and eaten slowly, shouldn't give you any problems.
- If certain foods disagreed with you before your surgery, they may still disagree with you. Try introducing those foods again with caution.
- Foods high in fiber should be tried in small amounts and chewed well.
- Gas and noise is natural and normal. Pouch filters can help minimize noise and odor. If you have excessive gas, check your diet for foods that are known to cause gas.



## **Medications**

- After surgery, the way your body digests and absorbs medications may change.
- Review all your medications (over-the-counter and prescription) with your doctor, ostomy nurse or pharmacist.
- Some medications can change the color or odor of your stool. If you notice any changes in your stool, contact your doctor or ostomy nurse.

## **Clothing**

- Pouches are designed to be slim and lie flat against your body to be less noticeable under clothing.
- Pouches can be worn either inside or outside your underwear.
- If your stoma is at or near your waistline, try to avoid pressure from tight waistbands and belts.
- Shape-wear, pantyhose and tights are fine as long as they are soft and stretchy.



## Travel

- You can travel with an ostomy.
- Bring enough supplies (and a few extra) with you in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage gets lost.
- You may need to explain your ostomy to airport workers at security screening locations if they pat you down or do a full body scan. There are cards available from ConvaTec, The United Ostomy Associations of America ([www.uoaa.org](http://www.uoaa.org)) and other resources which can help you with this explanation. The card will not prevent you from being scanned, but can help when speaking with a screener.
- Store your products in a cool, dry place (not in the car's trunk or glove compartment).





## Help and Support

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Adjusting to a colostomy takes time and you'll have questions and concerns along the way. Your doctor and ostomy nurse can help answer them and so can the health care professionals at ConvaTec.

- You can talk to an ostomy nurse at the ConvaTec Customer Interaction Center if you have questions about your colostomy, ostomy products, or if you need additional help and support. Simply call the ConvaTec Customer Interaction Center at 1-800-422-8811.
- You can order your free samples and information you'll need as you learn to care for your colostomy by calling the ConvaTec Customer Interaction Center on 1-800-422-8811.
- A ConvaTec ostomy nurse will call you after you've received your ConvaTec Starter Kit™ to check on you and see if you have any additional questions or concerns.

## For More Information

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### **ConvaTec**

Developing Ostomy Products and Solutions for Over 30 Years  
[www.convatec.com/ostomy](http://www.convatec.com/ostomy)

**Toll Free: 1-800-422-8811**

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### **The United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA)**

National organization providing support, information and advocacy

**Toll Free: 1-800-826-0826**

[www.uoaa.org](http://www.uoaa.org)

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### **Y.O.D.A.A.**

### **(Young Ostomate & Diversion Alliance of America)**

Community and resources for young adults (18-35) with ostomies

[www.yodaa.org](http://www.yodaa.org)

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### **American Cancer Society**

Nationwide community based voluntary healthcare organization

**Toll Free: 1-800-ACS-2345**

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

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### **Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America**

Non-profit, volunteer-driven organization dedicated to finding a cure for  
Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

**Toll Free: 1-800-932-2423**

[www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org)

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### **Great Comebacks® Program**

Provides information and inspiration to people living with serious  
intestinal diseases and ostomy surgery.

[www.greatcomebacks.com](http://www.greatcomebacks.com)

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# ConvaTec



## 1-800-422-8811

Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. EST

**CIC@convatec.com**

**www.convatec.com**

ConvaTec is aware that the JCAHO and the National Patient Safety Foundation have identified assessment and promotion of patient Health Literacy as one of the key components of quality health care delivery. ConvaTec supports your efforts by providing quality patient education brochures on the safe and effective use of ConvaTec products and related services such as the ConvaTec Customer Interaction Center patient call program.