



Leakages & Stoma Skin

Why it happens, how it happens
and what you can do



Understanding leakages

When you've got a stoma, accidents can happen and you may experience leakages from time to time.

A leakage is when output from your stoma, either urine or stool, comes into contact with the skin around your stoma, known as peristomal skin. A leakage not only occurs when you can see output on your skin, clothing or bedding but also without you knowing it, when output gets onto the skin directly under your baseplate where it cannot be seen.

Leakages can damage the skin, making it sore and inflamed. That's why it's important to know why your pouch is leaking, and what to do about it if it does.



Why leakages happen

Anyone with any type of stoma, or using any type of stoma product, can experience a leakage.

Common causes can include:

An ill-fitting baseplate

Your baseplate should fit snugly around your stoma. If you use cut-to-fit or pre-cut baseplates, have you measured your stoma recently? Or have you measured incorrectly? A stoma can change size and shape, especially in the first few weeks after surgery. If you have lost or gained weight, that can also change the size and shape of your stoma and also the area of skin around your stoma.

You should also make sure that you are using the right products for your type of stoma. For example, Mouldable Technology™ products are best suited to people with a protruding stoma, while Convex products are ideal for a retracted or flush stoma.

Wearing your pouch for too long

This can lead to your pouch becoming too full and heavy, and/or decrease the effectiveness of your baseplate skin barrier, pulling it away from the skin and allowing output beneath the baseplate.

Attaching your baseplate to damaged skin that is red and/or painful.

This can stop the baseplate from sticking properly to the skin, allowing output to come into contact with it and causing further irritation.



What type of stoma do you have?

Just like every person with a stoma, every stoma is different

U

Urostomy

People with a urostomy need to pay particular attention to making sure their peristomal skin is dry before applying their baseplate. Urine flows continuously, and any moisture under the baseplate can stop it sticking to the skin properly, leading to potential leaks.

Try changing your pouch at a time of day when your flow of urine is lighter. For many, this will be first thing in the morning, because little or no liquid has been consumed overnight.

You might also experience urinary crystals on your peristomal skin. White and gritty in appearance, they are linked to alkaline urine, and can hinder good adhesion of your baseplate and therefore lead to leaks. Drinking plenty of fluids can make urine more acidic, which can stop crystals from forming. Talk to your stoma care nurse about the best ways to maintain a healthy pH balance.



Ileostomy

If you have an ileostomy, part of your small intestine (the ileum) has been brought outside your abdomen to form a stoma. Your stoma will produce liquid output ranging from a watery consistency or something similar to porridge. This is because the food you consume has not passed through the large intestine (the colon), where water is absorbed, before being expelled from the body. It is a good idea to change your baseplate at a time when your stoma is less active, which might be when you wake.



C

Colostomy

During colostomy surgery, more of the large intestine is left intact. This is where water is absorbed from food, therefore output is usually more formed. This type of output can be less abrasive on the skin in the short term.

To stay hydrated, it is recommended to drink up to two litres of fluid daily. It's also important to enjoy a healthy balanced diet, incorporating high-fibre starchy foods such as rice, bread, pasta and potatoes.

How leakages can damage skin

The skin is the body's largest organ and acts as a barrier against external damage. To look after skin and keep it healthy it needs to be hydrated, kept clean and protected from the sun's UV rays.

When you have a stoma, it is important to care for your peristomal skin. This skin around your stoma can become sore, inflamed and uncomfortable if it comes into contact with output leaking from your pouch. This is because the pH of urine is different to the pH of skin, and stool contains active enzymes that can weaken the skin.

Peristomal skin can also become damaged if you remove your baseplate too quickly. This 'skin stripping' can go on to cause leaks because it stops proper adhesion.

Quite often, people who are experiencing stoma leakages don't feel comfortable talking about it. They may wait several days, weeks or even months before seeking help. Some even feel that it is something they have to put up with.

Peristomal skin should look no different to the rest of the healthy skin on your body.

If it becomes red, irritated or sore, you should seek advice from your stoma care nurse.

You don't have to live with leakages

Your peristomal skin should be no different to the skin on the rest of your body. And although leakages and sore skin can occur, they are not something that you should expect when you have a stoma.

Signs that your skin might be damaged include:

- Itching or soreness under your baseplate
- Skin feeling moist or warm, or looking wet
- Skin is pink or red
- There are blisters or weeping
- Skin does not return to its normal tone within a short time of baseplate removal

There is no need to feel embarrassed or let leakages damage your skin or your confidence. Don't feel you have to cope alone. As soon as you have concerns about leakages, or irritated peristomal skin, get in touch with your stoma care nurse. They will work with you to find a solution to these common but often treatable issues.



How to protect skin and stop leakages

Stoma leakages are very common in the early days after stoma surgery, and you can talk to your stoma care nurse about any worries you have.

No matter what stage you're at on your stoma journey, there are steps you can take to try to minimise the risk of leaks.

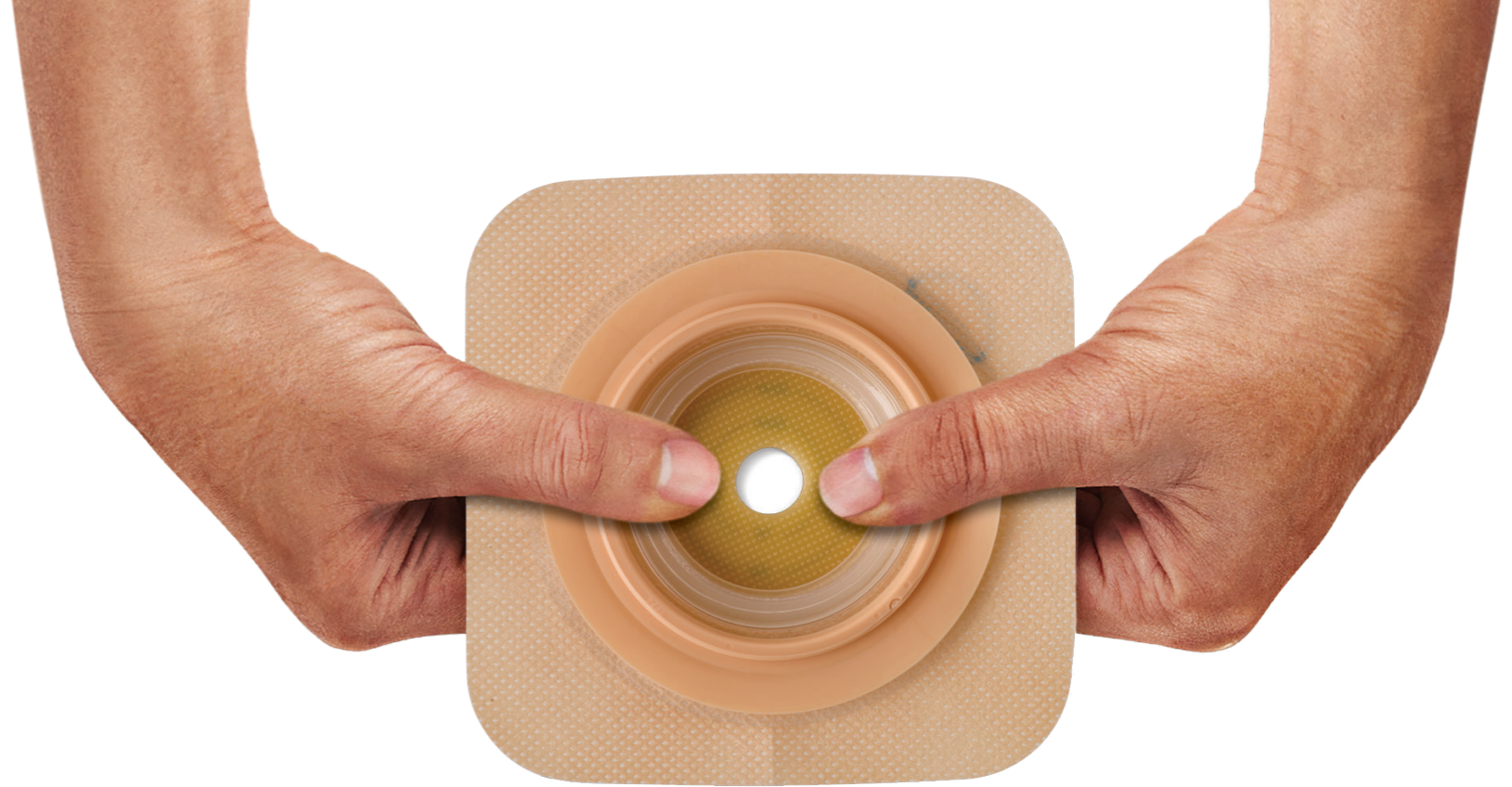
Your baseplate should fit snugly around your stoma. In the first few weeks after surgery, a stoma can change shape and size, so measuring it regularly will help you to cut your baseplate to the right size. The edge of the skin barrier baseplate should be 2-3mm from your stoma, leaving almost no visible skin.

Changing your pouching system regularly, and ensuring skin is completely dry before attaching your baseplate can help. And if you have hair on your abdomen, keeping it as short as possible, using electric clippers, means you'll avoid painful hair pulling when removing your baseplate.

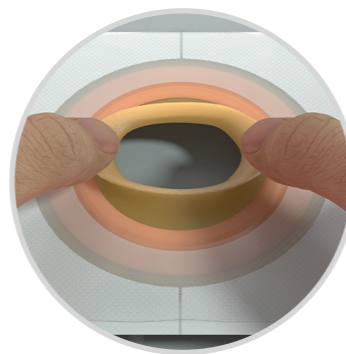
Have you tried...

Mouldable Technology™ baseplates feature an adjustable seal which you can mould around your stoma for a snug fit. Available in one and two-piece pouching systems, Mouldable Technology™ works best on protruding stomas.

To request a sample please call
0800 467 866 / 1800 721 721

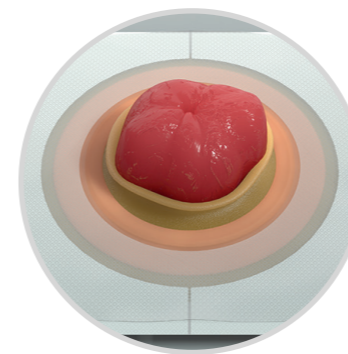


Unique Mouldable Technology™ is secure, soft and shaped to fit you



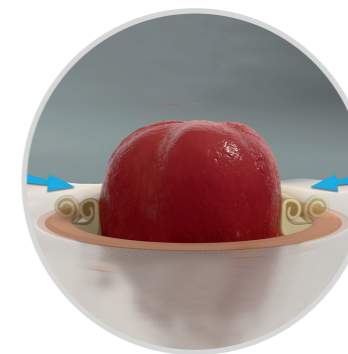
Step 1:
Roll Back

Use your thumbs to roll back the starter opening then ease the baseplate over your stoma.



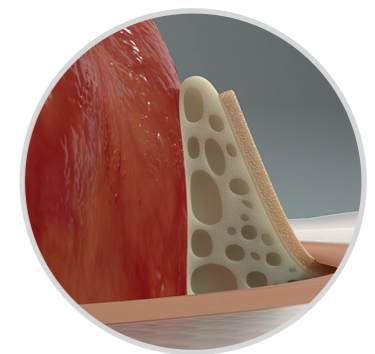
Step 2:
Apply Skin Barrier

Stick the baseplate to the skin and, if you need to, mould the material around the stoma for a precise fit.



Step 3:
Rebounds & Returns

The mouldable adhesive expands and contracts with the stoma as it changes size throughout the day when you're on the go.



Step 4:
LEAK-LOCK™ Activated

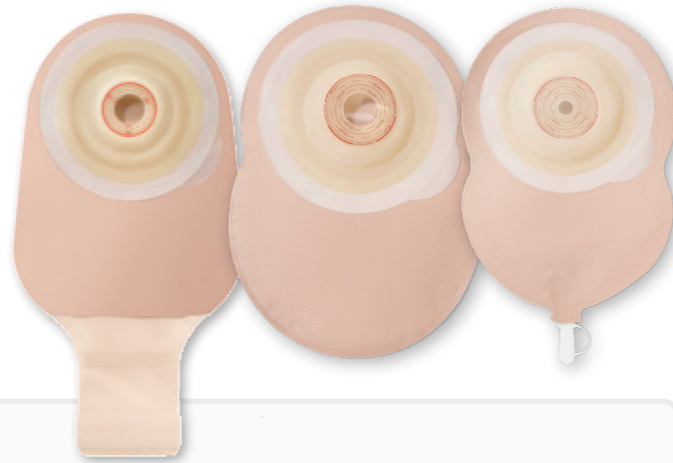
A layer of the baseplate can absorb moisture to gently swell around the stoma, creating a snug fit. It provides a "turtleneck" effect for even greater leakage protection.

How to protect skin and stop leakages

Try products designed to reduce the risk of leaks and promote healthy peristomal skin

Have you tried...

Esteem™+ Soft Convex pouches are made from flexible material offering a snug fit no matter what shape your stoma, which means a reduced risk of leakage and sore skin. Closed, drainable and urostomy options are available.



Convex solutions fit the contours of the body

Soft convexity designed with a shallow profile which minimizes pressure. Conforms well to the body and is comfortable to wear. Includes strong, skin-friendly adhesives in cut-to-fit drainable pouch options.

To request a sample please call 0800 467 866 / 1800 721 721

Have you tried...

ESENTA™ Skin Barrier creates a breathable barrier on the skin, which can protect it for up to 72 hours from the damaging effects of leakage and adhesives.

ESENTA™ Adhesive Remover can aid fast and easy release of adhesive, and help to reduce skin damage.



To request a sample please call 0800 467 866 / 1800 721 721



How to protect skin and stop leakages

Don't let leaks, or the fear of leaks, stop you living life to the full

Have you tried...

Esenta™ Hydrocolloid Strips move with the body and feature skin-friendly hydrocolloid, which forms a gel-like substance if it comes into contact with liquid.

Stomahesive™ Paste is hydrocolloid-based and can be used as a skin barrier for up to 72 hours. You can also use it as a filler on uneven surfaces or in folds to help increase pouch wear time and protect the skin.

Stomahesive™ Seals help to protect the skin around the stoma. They can be moulded to fit individual requirements and can be combined with Stomahesive™ Paste.



To request a sample please call 0800 467 866 / 1800 721 721



Life without leakages is possible

It's important to understand that leakages can happen from time to time when you have a stoma but they should not happen all the time. It is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about, but there are steps you can take to minimise the risk and look after your peristomal skin:





Tips on leakage prevention

DO



- ✓ Remove your baseplate slowly and gently, from top to bottom holding your skin with one finger, while the other hand gently pulls off the baseplate
- ✓ Gently wash peristomal skin with plain warm water, or use specialist products created for peristomal skin
- ✓ Ensure skin is completely dry by patting gently before applying your baseplate
- ✓ Regularly use clippers, perhaps a couple of times a week, to keep any hair around the site of your stoma as short as possible
- ✓ Try a two-piece system to avoid changing your baseplate too often
- ✓ Eat a balanced, varied diet and stay hydrated
- ✓ Before going to bed either empty your pouch or make sure it's no more than one-third full
- ✓ Measure your stoma at regular intervals - at least once a month - as it may change shape and size
- ✓ Make sure the edge of your skin barrier baseplate is 2-3mm from your colostomy or ileostomy, or 1mm from your urostomy, leaving almost no visible skin
- ✓ Try new products and accessories to find the right one for you
- ✓ Go to your stoma care nurse for help and advice as soon as you need it

DON'T



- ✗ Leave your pouch on when it is full/heavy
- ✗ Change any stoma product if you don't need to, to avoid skin stripping
- ✗ Apply your baseplate to broken skin
- ✗ Use any accessories without reading the instructions fully
- ✗ Rip off your baseplate quickly
- ✗ Wash with soaps and gels containing oils, perfumes or other chemicals often found in cosmetic products
- ✗ Use creams or ointments on peristomal skin
- ✗ Hesitate to seek advice from your stoma care nurse if you experience leakages or sore skin

Always remember, you are not alone on your stoma journey. Your stoma care nurse is on hand if you have any concerns or worries about leakages, so don't be afraid to contact them.

You can also join the free me+ support programme, which offers advice and lifestyle tips for everyone living with a stoma and their care-giver.



- forever caring -

Pioneering trusted medical solutions to improve the lives we touch



Claire Legeron

Enterostomal Therapy Nurse

The content of this booklet has been created with the support of Enterostomal Therapy Nurse Claire Legeron.

Claire studied nursing in Paris and undertook internships at La Timone hospital in Marseille and several hospitals in Bordeaux.

She spent 15 years of her surgical career at the Clinique de l'Atlantique in La Rochelle, and has been dedicated to caring for people living with a stoma for the last five years. As a member of the French Association of Enterostoma-Therapists (AFET), she is passionate about making her patients' lives better.