

# Your guide to **avoiding stoma leakages**



## If you have a stoma then you may have experienced a bag leakage

Whilst leakages can be embarrassing and difficult to deal with, you shouldn't have to live in fear or worry that your bag is going to leak.

Often those who have experienced a leakage feel like there's nothing that could help prevent it, but in many cases it's simply a case of keeping check on your care routine, products and the condition of your skin.

“Should I expect to have to put up with leaking bags?  
NO!”

Speak to a stoma nurse today



UK: 0800 085 2516

ROI: 1800 818 988

LINES OPEN MON – FRI 9AM – 5PM

[nurse.advisor@amcaregroup.co.uk](mailto:nurse.advisor@amcaregroup.co.uk)

## What problems can a leakage cause?

Along with the upset and embarrassment that a bag leakage can bring, it can cause other issues such as:

- **Irritated and sore skin** – bag leakage is the most common cause of soreness around the stoma. This happens as urine and faecal matter makes contact with the exposed skin.
- **Depression and anxiety** – along with the physical symptoms, leakages, especially over a long period of time can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.
- **Social isolation** – leakages might make you feel isolated and alone. For some it can even make leaving the house very difficult due to the fear of a leakage happening in public.
- **Sleep problems** – bag leakages can happen during the night when you have less control over your stoma. Not only will this affect your sleep pattern but also cause an unwanted mess.
- **Interrupts your day to day life** – having to rush off to deal with the affect of a leaking bag can interrupt plans, conversations, mood and the ability or desire to take part in activities.
- **Affects relationships** – the worry over leakages can also have a negative impact on relationships. Talking to your partner and telling them your concerns can help.



If you do suffer from bag leakages try not to worry, there are lots of ways you can try to prevent them from happening.

## How to spot the signs of a leak

Being able to spot the signs of a stoma bag leakage early could be your best defence from developing any issues.

Whilst leakages can be obvious when they cause your bag to fall off, which is called a complete bag failure - sometimes they can be a lot more subtle and more difficult to notice.

### It might not be so obvious

Even a discreet leakage can be just as damaging to the skin as a full bag failure. Many people living with a stoma aren't aware of seepage underneath the baseplate, which, if left for a long period of time can damage the skin.

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## Common causes of stoma bag leakages

One of the best ways of preventing leakages is being able to identify the cause of the problem.

**Post-operative changes:** The changes in the stomas size in the first weeks after surgery vary by person, but often as the skin settles down and any swelling subsides, the stoma can reduce in size too. This can lead to the baseplate not fitting snugly, increasing the risk of leakage.

**Weight loss or gain:** Even an established stoma can change in shape and size, and this is most often due to weight loss or weight gain. If there are any creases, folds or gaps in your baseplate caused by uneven skin, these also need to be filled to avoid leaks.

**Liquid output:** This is a common problem, particularly for those with a urostomy as the output is generally in liquid form which can cause leaks to happen more often.

**A full bag:** When the stoma bag gets too full it can cause it to get too heavy which increases the risk of the baseplate coming away from the skin or falling off.

**Pressure:** Belts and some clothing may cause pressure on the stoma area forcing output to seep out.

**Wet skin:** Another culprit for stoma bag leakages is moist skin underneath the baseplate, which may be a sign of maceration. Maceration is when the skin around the stoma becomes overhydrated because of prolonged exposure to moisture.

**Pancaking:** This can cause output to collect around the baseplate or leak between the baseplate and pouch.

**Sore skin:** Not only can leakage cause sore skin, but sore skin can lead to leakages by affecting the adherence of your stoma bag.

**Diet:** Leakage can be caused by watery output, and watery output can be caused by dietary changes.

**The wrong product:** There are lots of different adhesives and materials used in baseplates and the same one won't work for everyone.





## Top tips for avoiding leakages



### Do

- ✓ Use the right product. There are products available to suit a range of stoma shapes and sizes. If you experience leakage trying a different product could be all it takes to prevent it - there's lots of choice.
- ✓ Be precise. Make sure that the hole that you cut in your baseplate is the right size for your stoma to prevent any gaps every bag change.
- ✓ Find the right bag for your stoma. Remeasure your stoma size regularly to ensure you're getting a snug fit. Stomas often change in size and shape, particularly during the post-operative period when swelling caused by surgery starts to decrease.
- ✓ Ensure skin is dried thoroughly before applying your bag as this can help the adhesive to stick better.
- ✓ Apply a stoma seal such as the ConvaTec Stomahesive Seal if needed. These offer a simple and effective way to protect the skin around the stoma.
- ✓ Empty your bag before bedtime. This can help to reduce leakages at night.
- ✓ Try an output solidifier such as Diamonds™ Gelling Sachets. These easy to use sachets turn your liquid stoma output into an easy to manage gel helping to prevent leakage.



### Don't

- ✗ Use soap with oil or moisturiser when showering or bathing as these can leave a slippery surface on the skin.
- ✗ Eat meals too late in the evening if you experience night time leakages. Try varying your meal times as this could help to reduce bag leakages during the night.
- ✗ Wait too long between bag changes. The bag can get too full and too heavy.
- ✗ Forget to shave. Hair around the stoma can weaken the adhesive effect of the baseplate.
- ✗ Hesitate to contact a stoma nurse if you're struggling with leakages – you don't have to manage on your own.

### What if I'm sporty?

- ✓ Wearing a stoma guard can help protect your stoma from objects or excessive force hitting against it.
- ✓ A hernia support belt can help keep your bag secure.
- ✓ Emptying your bag before participating in any physical activity can also help.

### Top tip for swimming

Try putting your baseplate on at least an hour before you enter the water to allow it to properly adhere to your skin. If you are going to be diving or jumping into the water, then you can secure your bag with a stoma specific swimsuit or high-waisted, drawstring shorts.

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# Don't let leakages stop you living life the way you want

There's never a good time for a leakage to happen, but when it happens in public, not only can it be embarrassing but also difficult to deal with if you don't have everything you need.

“

I went to Disneyland last year and took two sets of spare clothes and a perineal wound dressing. I took a small rucksack and I felt better having all my supplies with me. If you make sure you're fully prepared, then a leak isn't a big deal.”

Chris, Merseyside



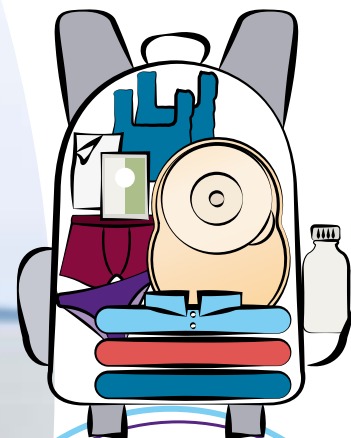
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## Emergency Checklist

Stoma bags  
Dry wipes  
Skin protector wipes  
Adhesive remover wipes  
Stoma seal  
Spare underwear  
Spare clothes  
Nappy bags

## It's all about preparation

If the thought of bag leakages is stopping you from getting out and about, there are a few simple things you can try today to help you feel more confident.

- **Plan ahead** – if you're thinking of going out, then carrying spare product can help you to be well prepared should a leakage occur.
- **Know where the nearest toilet is** – knowing there's a toilet nearby can give you that extra bit of reassurance. RADAR or accessible toilet keys are available for free from me+, which give you access to thousands of public toilets across the UK.
- **The toilet paper trick** – taking a few sheets of toilet paper can really help as sometimes a toilet might not have any and going off to look for some is not always an option. Others with a stoma have found it handy on aeroplanes, at motorway services, during long car journeys, etc. You could keep it in your purse, wallet, or even in your phone case!
- **Make use of the car** – having an emergency pack of several bag changes & spare clothes stored in the car can give you that extra reassurance. Some people living with a stoma have even had the back windows of their car tinted for added privacy.
- **Take spare clothes** – a spare change of clothes can help you feel confident when out and about.
- **me+ Can't Wait Card** – when shopping using this can help you to explain a potentially embarrassing situation quickly and helps with getting access to your closest toilet.
- **Mindset** – remember you are in control, not your stoma. Take charge of your care routine and feel more confident.

**Don't worry** – With the right product and a little preparation, you should be able to do most of the things you did before having a stoma.





# Glen's Leakage Story

I was playing golf once and my bag actually fell off as I was getting ready to tee off!

I was going to take my tee shot and lined it up all ready to go, and then it happened... my bag dropped off... What a nightmare! Straight down my trouser leg - I just didn't want to look down, you can imagine the mess I was in.

**Luckily I had an emergency change of clothes in my golf bag along with some wipes and spare bag.** I had no option but to clean myself up in a nearby stream. I still finished the rest of the round after getting cleaned up of course!

I felt like I had to make a bit of a joke about it and laughed it off! My colleagues were fine with it. I think it was actually a bit of education for them. They all asked me about my stoma and were very accepting.

I got through it by thinking to myself, it's just one of those things and wasn't my fault. Remember, if you're well prepared then a leakage isn't a big deal.

## ESTEEM® Soft Convex

“Extra security and support means I can enjoy my social life without worrying about leakages.”



New  
STOMA  
SOLUTION

All baseplates have tapered edges

- Fluid-resistant filter. **Extra leakage protection.**
- Soft cover on both sides. **Extra comfort.**



Shallow soft convex ring. **Extra support to feel secure and confident.**



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# Advice and support is just a phone call away

If you are experiencing issues with leakages and would like support, contact our specialist Amcare™ Group stoma nurses who can offer advice and assess your stoma. Our nurses are always happy to help over the phone or via video chat.



Medical  
Support

## Nurse Advisor Line

UK: 0800 085 2516  
ROI: 1800 818 988



Lifestyle  
Advice

## me+™ Advisors

UK: 0800 467 866  
ROI: 1800 721 721



Product  
Choice

## Product Specialists

UK: 0800 282 254  
ROI: 1800 721 721



0800 328 4257



0800 018 4724



0138 643 0140



Always consult a health care professional if you have any questions or concerns about your health condition.

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