

# Why Ostomy Nurses Are Essential

to Better Patient Outcomes



Living with a stoma is a life-altering experience — physically, emotionally, and socially. For patients, it can feel overwhelming. For healthcare teams, it presents a complex set of challenges.

That's where ostomy nurses come in. Their presence at every stage of the patient journey leads to measurably better outcomes<sup>1</sup> and a more human-centered approach to care.

"But there's a shortage of ostomy nurses globally. Here's an overview of the problem."

**"There's a huge gap in care – I used to meet patients who had never worked with an ostomy nurse. We need more trained professionals — and more awareness."**

*Joanna Burgess, Retired WOCN*



#### There is a global nursing shortage.

The worldwide gap in nurses<sup>2</sup> is estimated to be in the millions<sup>5</sup>, impacting the availability of ostomy care professionals.



#### There are not enough certified ostomy nurses.

In the U.S., alone, there are fewer than 4,000 certified WOC nurses<sup>3</sup> available to serve a rapidly growing population of ostomy patients.



#### Certain areas are more underserved than others.

Ostomy nurses are often concentrated in large hospitals and urban centers<sup>4</sup>, leaving smaller healthcare facilities significantly underserved.

Organizations like **United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA)** are working to fill the gap. They offer advocacy toolkits, mental health resources, a scholarship to get certified in ostomy care, a virtual ostomy clinic, and more.



Visit UOAA for  
Resources

## Specialized Expertise Improves Clinical Care

Ostomy care is not one-size-fits-all. It requires precision, vigilance, and deep clinical knowledge. Ostomy nurses bring all of that -- and more.

*Here are some of the issues ostomy nurses are trained to monitor:*



#### Skin Complications

- » Irritant or allergic contact dermatitis
- » Mechanical trauma
- » Infections
- » Folliculitis



#### Stoma-Specific Complications

- » Stoma retraction
- » Stoma prolapse
- » Parastomal hernia
- » Stenosis
- » Necrosis



#### Functional and Systemic Issues

- » Dehydration
- » Nutritional deficiencies
- » Obstruction
- » Exercise and movement
- » Post-operative recovery
- » Quality of life issues



## Here's how ostomy nurses improve patient outcomes:



**Early Assessment & Prevention:** They proactively monitor stoma sites and surrounding skin, catching complications before they escalate. This early intervention reduces hospital readmissions and prevents long-term issues.



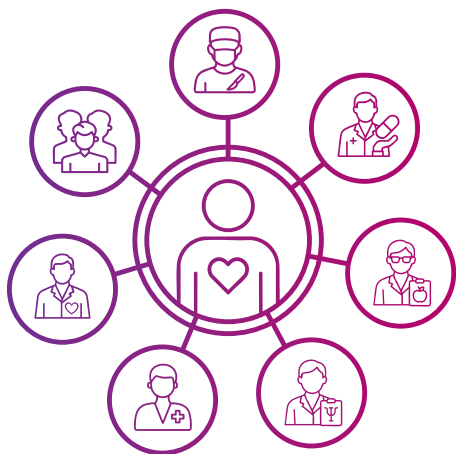
**Customized Appliance Fitting:** A poorly fitted pouch can lead to leaks, skin damage, and distress<sup>6</sup>. Ostomy nurses ensure each patient gets the right system for their body and lifestyle.



**Fewer Complications:** Their involvement is directly linked to lower rates of stoma-related complications, emergency visits, and surgical revisions.<sup>7</sup>

## Bringing Your Healthcare Team Together

Ostomy nurses are the connective tissue of the care team. They ensure that every aspect of a patient's needs is addressed—clinically, nutritionally, and emotionally.



- » **Care Coordination:** They work closely with surgeons, dietitians, pharmacists, and other specialists to create personalized care plans.
- » **Staff Education:** By training other healthcare providers, they raise the standard of healthcare across the board.

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# Roles and Responsibilities of an Ostomy Nurse



## Education & Patient Empowerment

Ostomy nurses are educators at heart; from preparing patients before surgery to guiding them through self-care techniques afterwards, their support doesn't stop at the hospital door. They provide a safety net that supports long-term outcomes.



## Emotional & Psychological Support

Ostomy nurses know that healing isn't just physical — it's emotional, too. They provide compassionate guidance to help patients adjust to their new reality, and their consistent presence and encouragement help patients and families feel seen.



## Consistency & Standardization

Ostomy nurses bring consistency and quality. They follow the latest evidence-based guidelines and their involvement leads to better teaching, fewer complications, and higher patient satisfaction.

## Addressing the Ostomy Nurse Shortage



To ensure every patient has access to this essential support, we must act now.



**Healthcare Institutions:** Invest in ostomy nurse training and recruitment. Prioritize funding for specialized roles that directly improve patient outcomes and reduce long-term costs.



**Nursing Schools:** Integrate ostomy care into core curricula. Preparing future nurses with foundational knowledge ensures a pipeline of clinicians ready to meet rising demand.



**Patients and Caregivers:** Know your rights. Patients should be informed that they have the right to specialized ostomy care — and be empowered to ask for it. Awareness is the first step toward advocacy.

By working together — across institutions, education, and patient communities—we can close the gap and ensure that every person living with a stoma receives the expert, compassionate care they need to thrive.



## Healthy Bonds™: Stronger Connections. Better Ostomy Care.

Convatec delivers whole-person support through innovation, education, and community —because better care starts with stronger bonds.



References: 1. Shoja M, Arsalani N, Fallahi-Khoshknab M, Mohammadi-Shahboulaghi F. The barriers and facilitators to nursing care for patients with permanent colostomy in outpatient centers: A qualitative study. *J Educ Health Promot*. 2024;13:72. Published 2024 Feb 26. doi:10.4103/jehp.jehp.272.23. 2. World Council of Enterostomal Therapists®. Around the WCET® world. *WCET® Journal* 2020;40(2):9-17. 3. Wound Ostomy Continence Nurses Society. Available at: [www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org). Cited: July 22, 2002. 4. Naseh L, Shahriri M, Hayrabedian A, Moelini M. Nurses' viewpoints on factors affecting ostomy care: A qualitative content analysis. *Nurs Open*. 2023;10(8):5261-5270. doi:10.1002/nop2.1764. 5. World Health Organization. State of the world's nursing report 2025. World Health Organization, Chief Nurse Office, Health Workforce; May 12, 2025. Accessed July 25, 2025. State of the world's nursing report 2025. 6. Jeppesen PB, Vestergaard M, Boisen EB, Ajslev TA. Impact of stoma leakage in everyday life: data from the Ostomy Life Study 2019. *Br J Nurs*. 2022;31(6):S48-S58. doi:10.12968/bjon.2022.31.6.S48. 7. Westra, B. L., Bliss, D. Z., Savik, K., Hou, Y., & Borchert, A. (2013). Effectiveness of Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses on Agency-Level Wound and Incontinence Outcomes in Home Care. *J Wound Ostomy Continence Nurs*, 40(1), 25-33. 7. Cheng Y, Chen YX. Effects of high-quality nursing on surgical site wound infections after colostomy in patients with colorectal cancer. *World J Gastrointest Surg*. 2024;16(12):3835-3842. doi:10.4240/wjgs.v16.i12.3835. AP-76347-GBL-ENG-v1

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