

Caring for your Stoma Skin

How to keep peristomal skin
in the healthy zone



Your guide to peristomal skin health

When you have had stoma surgery - either a colostomy, an ileostomy or a urostomy - you are left with an area of skin around this new part of your body which is known as peristomal skin. Because of your condition, this skin can be prone to damage, and this guide has been created to help you understand why.

It also aims to show you that as an ostomate, sore peristomal skin is not something you have to tolerate, and that with a good care regime it should look and feel just like the rest of your skin.

We will guide you on how to care for your skin and give tips that may help reduce the risk of damage occurring.

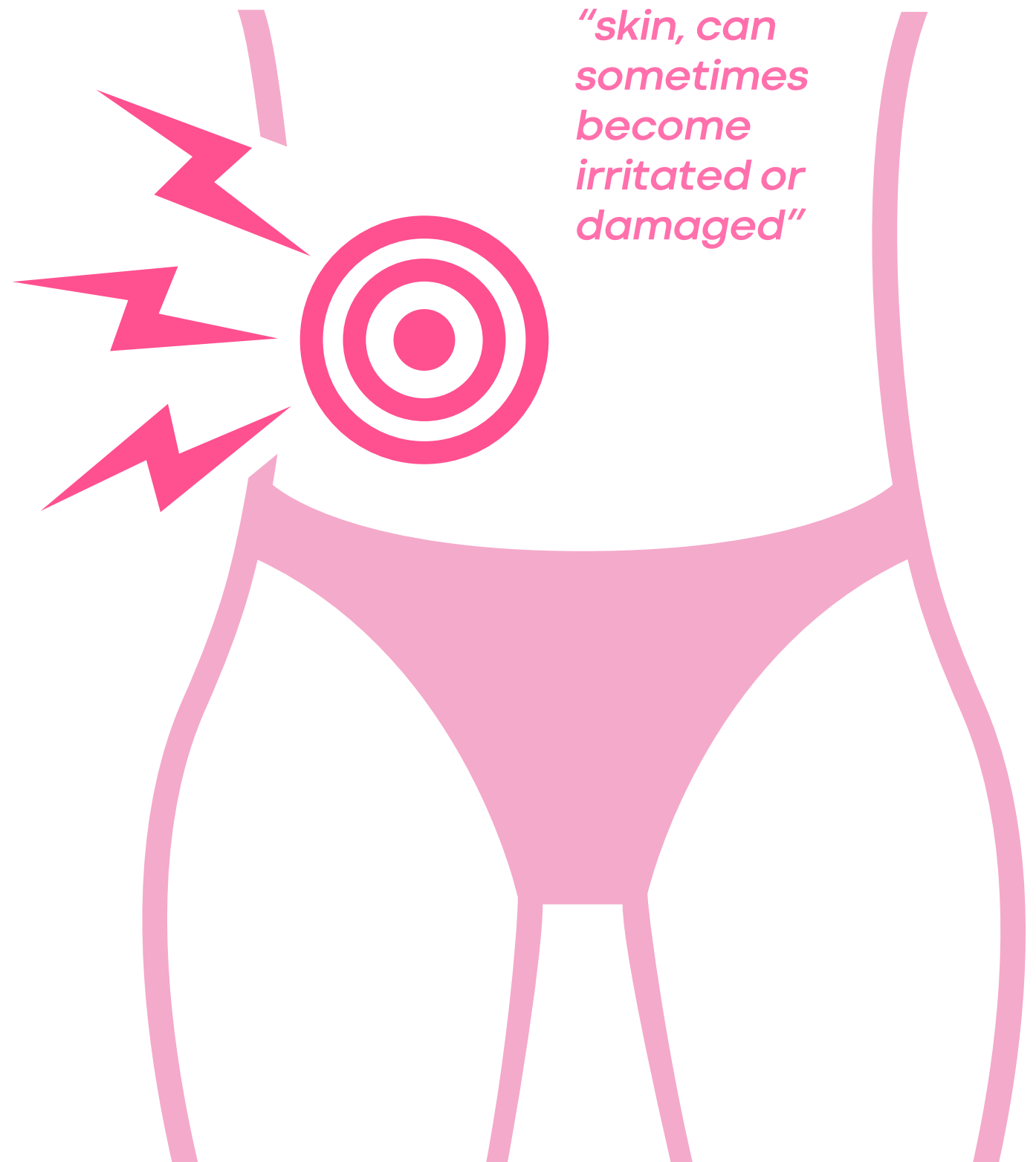
When you have a stoma, you are not alone, and you do not have to suffer in silence. Sore peristomal skin can have a huge impact on your quality of life, so if you have any issues or worries you should talk to your stoma care nurse, who will be able to offer advice. We also offer a range of products and accessories for you to try, all with healthy skin in mind.

What is peristomal skin?

A stoma is formed during an operation which brings part of your intestine outside of your body. It is stitched onto your abdomen, and this area is known as peristomal skin. From then on, bodily waste will be directed into a pouch that you will wear over your stoma, attached to your peristomal skin.

A stoma has no nerve endings so you shouldn't feel any pain or sensation from it, although the area directly around it may feel sore for a short time immediately after your operation.

Because you will wear a pouch on your peristomal skin, it can sometimes become sore, irritated or damaged, and in the next section we will tell you why and how this damage is caused.



How damage is caused to peristomal skin

Now you wear a pouch, this will need to be changed often, which means sticking it to and removing it from your peristomal skin. You might also experience leakages from your pouch from time to time, causing output to come into contact with the skin. Both of these occurrences can make your skin sore or irritated, and applying your pouch to this damaged skin can then lead to a vicious cycle.

For these reasons, it's essential that you look after your skin as best you can, and always check for early signs of damage.

Peristomal skin really should look and feel just like the rest of the skin on your body. But if you do experience sore peristomal skin, or have any concerns about it, you should never be afraid to seek advice. Talk to your stoma nurse, or call one of our stoma care specialists.



"Convatec's customer care specialists can help you to find the right product for you, and if you are in Germany, you might even have me on the phone!"

Convatec customer care specialist and ostomate **Paolo Adrian Häckl**, who has helped us to create this booklet

You can call the Convatec Customer Service Team and Product Specialists on XXXXXXXXXX for help and advice

Two common causes of sore or irritated peristomal skin are:

Skin stripping

Because you are sticking your pouching system to your skin and removing it on a regular basis, you can cause trauma to the top layer of skin. This is known as skin stripping and it can occur if you remove your baseplate too quickly, and without the correct use of adhesive remover.



Leakages

A leaking pouch, with output - either urine or stool - coming into contact with the peristomal skin, can cause irritation and soreness. This is because the pH of urine is different to the pH of skin, and stool contains enzymes that can weaken the skin. If you find that your pouch is leaking, you should speak to your stoma nurse. Leakages can occur for a number of reasons including:

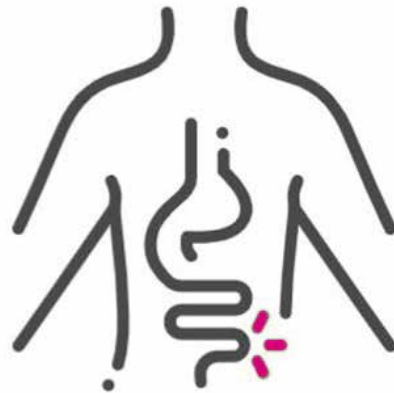
- **An ill-fitting pouch** - this can be due to a change in the shape or size of your stoma, or your abdomen if you were to gain or lose weight
- **Wearing your pouch for too long**, leading it to become full and heavy, pulling the baseplate from the skin and allowing output to form beneath it
- **A change in the consistency of your output**, which can happen if you consume items that make your output less solid and more watery
- **Attaching your pouch to already damaged skin**, which can stop the baseplate from adhering properly



For advice and tips on all aspects of living with a stoma, visit meplus.convatec.com or scan the QR code

Spotting the signs of damaged peristomal skin

Depending on your pouching system and routine you might not see your peristomal skin for up to five days, so it's really important that you look for changes or signs of damage every time you change your pouch.



If you have any concerns about leakages, or irritated peristomal skin, it is recommended that you speak to your stoma care nurse right away so that together you can find the best solution.

Signs that your skin might be damaged include:

- Itching or soreness under your baseplate
- Skin feeling moist or warm
- Skin looking wet
- Skin is pink or red
- Skin does not return to its usual tone within a short time of your baseplate being removed

Parastomal hernia

Another condition which can develop around the site of a stoma is a parastomal hernia. This is a bulge which can appear beneath the skin next to a stoma because the surgery has caused a weakness in the muscle.

They are quite common in ostomates, and usually appear gradually, becoming more noticeable when you stand or strain.

If you think you might be developing a parastomal hernia, you should talk to your stoma care nurse straightaway.

To learn more about the benefits of gentle exercise after stoma surgery, visit meplus.convatec.com to discover the me+™ Recovery Programme.

When to seek medical advice

Convatec customer care specialist Paolo Häckl had stoma surgery in 2018, and understands that ostomates don't want to go to the doctor at the first sign of every issue. However, he also knows, from experience, that problems don't always go away or fix themselves.

Here's his advice on when it's best to seek medical help, but if you are concerned about any changes to your stoma or peristomal skin, you should always consult your stoma care nurse or other healthcare provider.



Persistent irritation

If the skin around your stoma remains red, irritated or inflamed despite appropriate and consistent care, this could indicate an infection or other underlying issue.

Severe pain/discomfort

You shouldn't experience severe pain or discomfort around your stoma. Pain can be a sign of infection or other conditions that need prompt treatment.

Unusual skin changes

If you spot changes to your skin such as a rash, sores, blisters or discolouration, they should be checked out.

Frequent leakages

This can signal issues with the fit or adhesion of your stoma care products, so your stoma care nurse could help by recommending more appropriate products for you.

Psychological distress

If your stoma surgery leaves you struggling with feelings of low self-esteem or anxiety, seeking support from a mental health professional could be life-changing. Talk to your stoma care nurse or healthcare provider about this.

"You don't need to be a superhero living with pain, go see a professional when dealing with persistent discomfort!"

Paolo Adrian Häckl

Caring for peristomal skin

When you have a stoma, it is essential that you take good care of your peristomal skin, which in turn should help to reduce the chances of your pouch leaking and causing more damage. Take a look at these tips on maintaining healthy skin.



Pouching routine tips

- If you find that you are changing your one-piece pouch too often, try using a two-piece system to avoid changing your baseplate every time
- When you remove your baseplate, do it slowly and gently, from top to bottom, holding your skin with one finger
- Try using ESENTA™ adhesive remover when taking your pouch off, ESENTA™ barrier when applying your new pouch, and ESENTA™ Hydrocolloid strips to contain any leakages
- Make sure your baseplate fits snugly around your stoma, and measure your stoma at regular intervals, as it can change shape and size
- If you need to, use clippers to keep any hair you have around your stoma as short as possible
- Always empty or change your pouch before bedtime
- If you want to let your peristomal skin breathe, remove your pouching system completely for small amounts of time, keeping a towel handy just in case there's any activity
- If you're not happy with a product, don't be afraid to try something new until you find the right product for you



For expert advice and real-life stories on a host of stoma-related topics

Scan the QR code or visit meplus.convatec.com



Bathing and showering tips

- When washing, be gentle, using plain warm water
- If you want to use soaps or gels, make sure they are free from oils and perfumes, as these can stop your baseplate adhesive from working properly
- If you want to shower or bathe pouch-free, go ahead, water will not enter your stoma, although your stoma could become active
- When drying yourself, pat your peristomal skin gently and make sure it is completely dry



"Feeling safe in my ostomy gear, and having my peristomal skin get better and better, means enjoying life after my stoma surgery, not just existing."

Paolo Adrian Häckl

Give yourself the best chance of happy skin

A good pouching routine can really help you to maintain healthy peristomal skin, but the following pages feature even more lifestyle tips and tricks.



Exercise and activity

Exercise is important for everyone, including those living with a stoma. You might worry about physical activity causing damage to your peristomal skin or causing pouch leakages, but there are steps you can take to avoid the risks.

- Before you start any form of activity or exercise, make sure you empty or change your pouch
- Try wearing a support belt, wrap or fitted gym gear to keep your pouch firmly in place
- Make sure that your waistband isn't restricting your pouch - this applies to all your outfits, not just activewear
- If you join a gym, talk to a personal trainer about a programme tailored to you
- Whenever you enjoy an active day out, make sure you take your stoma supplies with you and a change of clothing just in case



Diet and hydration

No food or drink should be off limits when you have a stoma, but avoiding leakages is key for maintaining healthy peristomal skin.

Some food and drink can make your output more liquid, which can lead to leakages, so you might want to modify your diet to consume less of these. Of course, everyone is different, and foods that affect some people may cause you no problems at all. Keeping a food diary is a good way to find out what suits you and what does not.

Items that can cause liquid output include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Raw or undercooked vegetables | • Fruit juice |
| • Spicy dishes | • Fatty food |
| • Prunes and figs | • Cereals, including bran |
| • Chocolate | • Rhubarb |
| • Fresh and dried fruits | • Spinach |

Some foods also have a reputation for causing blockages, so be careful when you eat them and chew them thoroughly. These can include:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| • Nuts | • Currants and raisins |
| • Coconut | • Vegetables such as celery, mushrooms and sweetcorn |
| • Popcorn | |

"I don't really know why, but soup and fruit juices turn my stoma into an angry volcano!"

Paolo Adrian Häckl

Drink up

Staying hydrated is really important, not only for skin health and avoiding stoma blockages, but to keep your whole body and mind in tip-top condition.

The average person loses around 2 to 2.5 litres of fluid each day through normal bodily functions, with exercise and high temperatures adding to this total as you sweat more.

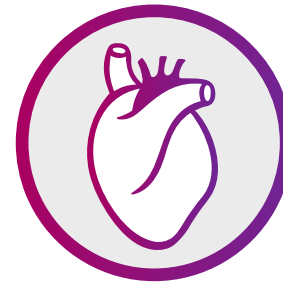
People with an ileostomy might lose even more than that, with up to an extra 800ml of fluid going into their pouch, and people with a urostomy might avoid drinking too much through a fear of filling their pouch.

Signs that you might be dehydrated include:

- Feeling thirsty
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Nausea
- Cramps
- Tiredness/feelings of fatigue
- Passing less urine than usual



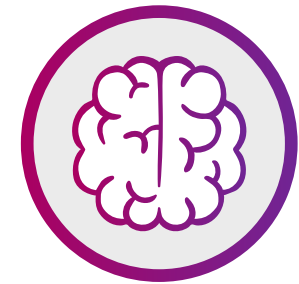
For loads of tips on diet and hydration visit meplus.convatec.com or scan the QR code



Healthy heart



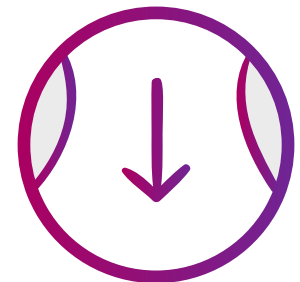
Good mood



Brain boost



Skin health



Weight loss



Lubricated joints



High metabolism



Muscle tone

Your pouching system

You might have a great pouching routine, but if you're wearing a system that's not right for you, all your good work could be for nothing. If something doesn't feel right, you should never be afraid to ask for advice, or to try a new product.



Natura® two-piece drainable pouch

Featuring a Convatec Mouldable Technology baseplate, this pouch is made using rebounding Memory Technology. It can be moulded to fit around any stoma, forming a strong seal.



Natura®
Cut-to-fit baseplate



Natura®
Pre-cut baseplate



To order your Natura® two-piece drainable pouch samples scan the QR code

Your pouching system

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1

Gold-standard adhesives secure the barrier, protecting the skin.



Range of soft convexity combinations are designed to get the right fit right from the start.

2



EsteemBody™ with Leak Defence™.

Esteem Body™ one-piece soft convex system

Our new one-piece ostomy system with Leak Defense™ combines our gold-standard adhesives with a comprehensive soft convexity range, designed to adapt to the body for a secure, longer-lasting seal.

They are designed to suit ostomates with a flush or retracted stoma, or with an abdomen that has folds or loose skin.

- Available in 2 depths and 4 tension locations to help you find the optimal convex option.
- As pioneers in hydrocolloids, our adhesives were created to help users get it right the first time, every time.

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Accessories



ESENTA™ Skin Barrier

Kind to skin, this creates a breathable barrier that protects against the damage that can be caused by adhesives, bodily waste and enzymes. It is safe and effective even with frequent use.

ESENTA™ Adhesive Remover

This quickly removes adhesive residue to release appliances or dressings that are adhered to skin.

ESENTA™ Hydrocolloid Strips

If you need more wear time, these are designed to help keep baseplates in place and contain any leakages if they occur. They are flexible and easy to apply, offering an extra layer of security during activities such as playing sport or swimming.



Stoma Appliance Belt

This can be attached to a baseplate with belt tabs to keep the pouch firmly in place. However, it is important that it is not placing too much pressure on your pouch.

Stomaheal® Seals

These create a secure seal between your stoma and your ostomy appliance, helping to prevent leakages and protect your skin against stoma output.

Stomaheal® Paste

Designed to be skin-friendly, it fills in uneven areas around the stoma to help prevent leakage that may result in skin breakdown.

Diamonds™ Gelling Sachets

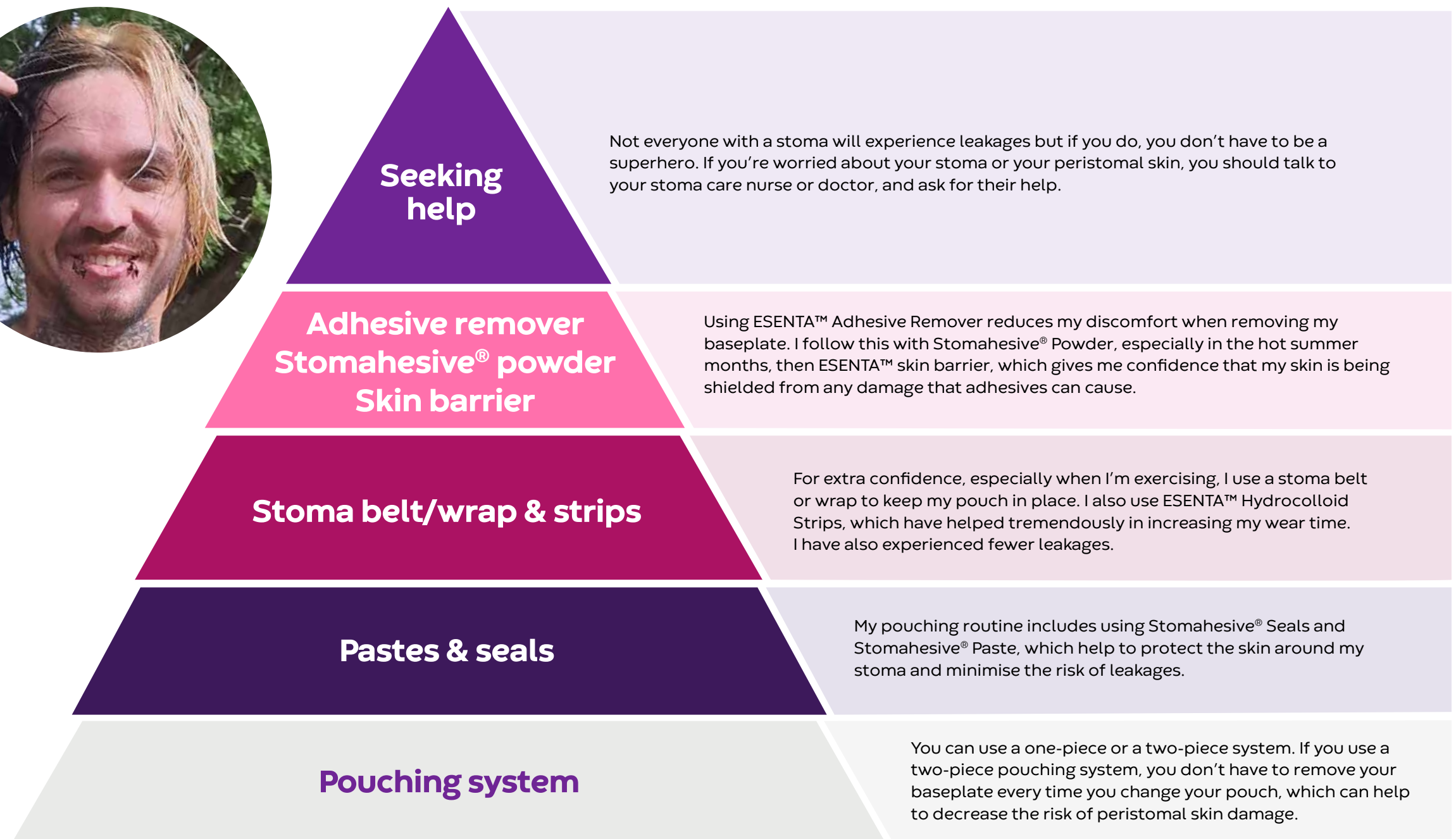
You can use these to solidify liquid output and reduce or eliminate the odours associated with excess gas.



To order your free product samples
scan the QR code

My hierarchy of needs

As an ostomate, Paolo finds 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' - a psychological theory of human needs usually depicted as levels within a pyramid - a useful tool in understanding his own specific requirements.



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Paolo Adrian Häckl

Convatec consumer care specialist and ostomate

Convatec would like to thank our consumer care specialist Paolo Adrian Häckl for his help in creating this booklet and reviewing its content.

Paolo is also an ostomate, having undergone surgery for a colostomy in 2018, and this has taught him much about life, priorities, and the importance of never giving up on yourself and your passions.

As well as his commitments to Convatec, Paolo is a musician, who regularly plays and tours with his band Akuma Six. He also has a huge social media presence, with his content on living with an ostomy gaining more than 400,000 followers.

Paolo knows firsthand just how strong people with a chronic condition are, and how sometimes it can be very hard to ask others for help. But, he says, knowing when to ask for help is one of the smartest and most important decisions an ostomate can make.

Paolo's socials on this, so that people can follow him? - would need links



This booklet is adapted from the sources in local language: Bathing with an Ostomy - Gastrointestinal Society. Living with a stoma: Tips to Physical Activity - Convatec. Guide: How To Travel With a Stoma - Convatec. <https://www.southtees.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Urine-colour-chart.pdf>. Leakages and Stoma skin booklet AP-62317. Hoeflok 2009
A prospective multicenter evaluation of a moldable stoma skin barrier. <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/the-importance-of-hydration.html>

You can contact ILCO, which offers an independent advocacy service for ostomates by visiting xxxxxxxxxx (specific country's email address to be added)



The content in this booklet is intended for general information and guidance only. It is important to attend regular check-ups and/or seek advice from a healthcare professional if you have any issues with your health.

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