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A guide to **living with a stoma**

The right bag for you

www.bullens.com/stoma-guides

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The right bag for you

What type of bag should you use?

Having the right bag is as individual as the person wearing it. There are many things to take into consideration such as whether your output is formed or loose, body shape, stoma size, any skin sensitivities and even what type of clothes you like to wear. It is also down to what feels good for you.

In general terms, most people with a colostomy produce formed stool and will wear a closed bag, which will need to be changed between one to three times a day. Those with an ileostomy will wear a drainable bag, which can be emptied regularly throughout the day and changed between every three to seven days, and someone with a urostomy will wear a bag with a drainable tap on the end so that urine can be regularly drained from the pouch and will be fully changed around every three days.



Types of bag

There are many types of different bags, which have been detailed below. It is advisable to trial different types of bags to find one that you feel comfortable and confident wearing. You don't have to settle just for the one you are given straight out of surgery.



Closed bags

As the name suggests, these bags have a closed bottom and are most suited to those who pass formed stools. These bags will need to be changed as soon as the bag becomes around a third full, which on average is between one and three times a day. They usually come in three different sizes mini, midi and maxi, What size you wear is down to personal preference and based on how much output you usually pass.



Drainable bags

These bags will have an opening that allows loose stools to be drained out and emptied into the toilet. They will then normally have a velcro or clip mechanism to fold the flap section and keep the bag secure. Generally those with an ileostomy will wear this kind of bag although some people with a colostomy prefer wearing these bags as the baseplates tend to be stronger and more durable. Again you can get these in three sizes, mini, midi and maxi to suit.



Urostomy bags

Urostomy bags are similar to drainable bags except they have a little plastic tap on the end to allow urine to drain from the bottom.



One piece bags

These types of bags have an all-in-one baseplate and bag. They are the most commonly used and are liked as they generally sit flatter to the body and are less fiddly to put on around the stoma.



Two piece bags

These types of bags have a separate baseplate and a bag that either clips or sticks using an adhesive directly onto the baseplate. This type of bag is useful if you suffer from skin problems and you don't like to keep removing the baseplate. You can simply unclip the bag section and replace with a new bag.



Convex bags

These types of bags are suitable for those who have a retracted stoma and find that wearing a flat baseplate causes leaks. The convex opening moulds into the gaps and gently forces the stoma forward. A convex bag should only be worn after a consultation with a stoma nurse as wearing a convex bag when not needed can cause damage to the skin.



Concave bags

These types of bags are suitable if you have a hernia or any creases or outward areas around the stoma that you need your baseplate to mould around. Again it is best to consult with your stoma nurse before changing to this bag type to make sure it's appropriate for you.



Measuring your stoma and cutting your bag

One of the most important and basic tasks in looking after your stoma is to ensure that your bag is cut to the correct size and shape of your stoma. You can check the size of your stoma by using one of the template guides that are usually found in your box of stoma supplies. The template should fit snugly around your stoma without cutting into it. If you leave too large a gap around the edges this can lead to output reaching the skin and causing skin irritations, which can lead to your bag not sticking to your skin effectively.

You can choose to either cut the bags yourself, most stoma bag suppliers will be able to send you a special pair of stoma scissors to cut your bags with, or your stoma nurse may give you a set in hospital to take home with you or you can send your template to your supplier and they will cut the bags to fit you. Some people prefer to do this themselves, especially if they have a more oval shaped, rather than circular stoma.



Remember to measure your stoma regularly as it's size can fluctuate, especially after the first three months of surgery. Any changes to your weight can also affect the size of your stoma. Your stoma can also shrink or increase in size whilst it's functioning so it's worth taking this into consideration when measuring for your bag.

Support and additional products for your bag

There are many different products available to help you feel more confident and secure with your stoma along with support belts and underwear, which may help prevent you from developing a hernia or help support a hernia if you already have one. Most of these products are available on prescription or are offered as a complimentary item by your stoma bag supplier.

Complimentary items

Your delivery company may offer some or all of these as part of their home delivery service.



Wet wipes

Useful to carry around when out and about to wipe off excess output from the end of a drainable bag. They're not normally recommended for use around the stoma as they can cause irritation and affect how well your pouch sticks.



Dry wipes

These can be dampened to clean around the stoma and then used to dry the area around the stoma before attaching a new bag.



Disposal bags

Scented disposable bags have been designed for the hygienic and convenient method of ostomy and appliance waste disposal. Available in a pack of 30.



Bed pads

These can be placed over bed sheets to help protect against any accidental leaks that may occur.



Hand sanitiser

Discreet pocket size pump spray, ideal when on the go. Kills 99.99% of germs in the first 30 seconds. No alcohol formula and kind to hands. 50 mls.



Scissors

Curved scissors for cutting your bags or pouches at home or when away on holiday. Bullen Healthcare offers a cutting service as part of our Home Delivery Service.

Also available on prescription

These additional products may be available on NHS prescription. Please speak to your GP or Stoma Care Nurse to see if they are available in your area.



Barrier Products

Barrier products can come as a spray, wipe or cream and are designed to leave a protective layer on your skin to help prevent output from irritating your skin. A spray is much more cost effective than wipes. Trio Elisse is the only patented skin barrier as it not only protects the skin, but actively soothes red and irritated skin.



Support garments

Support garments available include wraparound belts and high waisted briefs, boxers and vests tops with a support panel. There are different levels of support ranging from light to firm.



Adhesive remover sprays/wipes

These are ideal in helping to remove your bag without tearing or causing any soreness or damage to the skin. There are many different adhesive removers available - some with a fragrance to remove any smells during a bag change.



Flange extenders

These come in two different shapes normally straight or curved and can be wrapped around your existing baseplate for added protection if you find you have gaps in your baseplate due to natural skin dips or scarring.



Stoma paste

This is the stoma equivalent of polyfilla! The paste fills in any gaps between your baseplate and skin, which creates a seal and stop any output from reaching the skin.



Stoma barrier rings/seals

These are seals that mould around your stoma to protect the skin from output. There are different types available including hydrocolloid rings that absorb any moisture from under the ring and help to promote healing and silicone rings that are designed to stretch and fit into any creases or dips around your stoma.



Ostomy odour drops

Adding these drops can help to reduce odour from the bag when emptying. There are a range of scents available, which can help mask the smell or you can get unscented odour eliminators such as 'Na'Scent', which eliminates the smell completely.



Stoma bag gelling agents

Adding in a sachet of an ostomy gelling agent can help to absorb liquid output making it easier to empty and less likely to leak from the pouch.

Testing new products

Please seek advice from your stoma nurse before trialling any new bags or additional products.

If you are not happy with the bag that you are using or are experiencing any issues such as leaks or sore skin, it is ok to seek advice from your stoma nurse and/ or supplier and try out samples of other bags to see if they are a more comfortable fit for you. By letting your stoma nurse and/or supplier know what your issues are, they will be able to recommend suitable alternatives to you. You can usually order samples of bags online to try, alongside samples of a supporting additional product such as adhesive spray removers and baseplate extenders. If your GP or stoma nurse agrees that you need this new product then it will usually get added to your prescription.

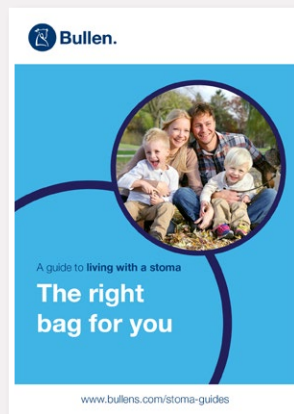
It is important to have a check up with your stoma nurse before trialling any convex or concave products to avoid any injury to your skin.

All guides in our series...

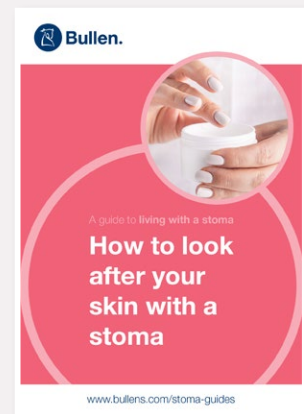
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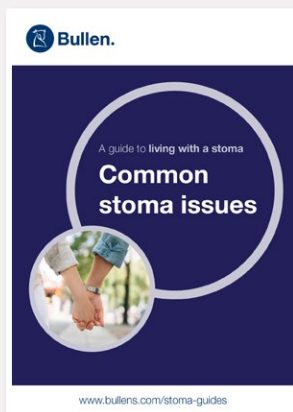
The definitive guide to living with a Stoma (includes all guides)



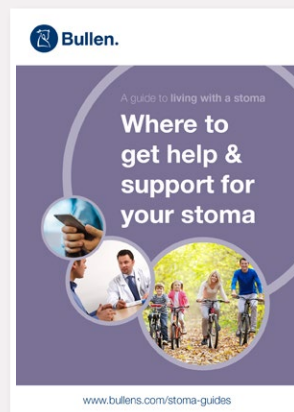
The right bag for you



How to look after your skin with a stoma



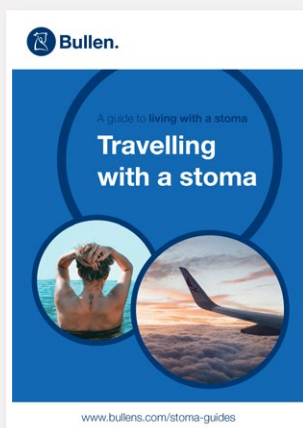
Common stoma issues



Where to get help and support for your stoma



Guide to diet and exercise after a stoma surgery



Travelling with a stoma



Clothing and your stoma

Can we help?

Why not give us a call today and speak to one of our friendly personal customer advisors and find out more about how Bullen Healthcare can help you get on with life with a stoma without any worries.

Call us on

Freephone 0800 031 5401

Visit us at

www.bullens.com/stoma-guide

Useful Links

Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group

www.iasupport.org

Colostomy UK

www.colostomyuk.org

Urostomy Association

www.urostomyassociation.org.uk