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A guide to **living with a stoma**

How to look after your skin with a stoma

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Contents

- 01** How to look after your skin with a stoma
- 02** Making sure your bag fits properly
- 02** Additional products for your skin
- 04** Top tips for skin irritations
- 06** All guides in our series
- 07** Can we help?
- 07** Useful links

How to look after your skin with a stoma

Having healthy peristomal skin is vital to ensure that your stoma bag sticks effectively to your skin. One of the most common complications for people with a stoma is having sore, irritated, red and broken skin. There are many reasons why your skin may become sore. The most common reason is output coming into contact with the skin. Allergies to the bag adhesive and fungal skin infections are other issues.

Not only is having sore and broken skin uncomfortable and painful but it can also affect how your bag sticks to your skin, which in turn creates a vicious cycle of leaks and further broken skin. It's important to get any damage under control as quickly as possible in order to prevent this cycle from happening. Below are some easy ways to help prevent and treat peristomal skin irritations.

If you skin irritation is severe and does not improve after a few days then you should make an appointment to see your stoma nurse for treatment.



Making sure your bag fits properly

One of the most basic ways to help keep your peristomal skin healthy is to make sure that you have measured and cut your bag correctly to ensure that the bag fits snugly around your stoma (without cutting into your stoma) to help avoid output from reaching the skin and causing soreness.

You can measure your stoma by using the templates provided in your box of stoma bags. Remember to measure your stoma regularly as it's size can fluctuate, especially in the first three months after your surgery. Any changes in your weight can also affect the size of your stoma. You may also find that your stoma shrinks or increases when it is functioning so it also worth taking that into consideration when measuring for your bag.



Additional products for your skin

There are additional products that you can try to help prevent or relieve any skin irritations, these include:



Barrier sprays / creams

Applying a barrier spray or cream to the skin under your bag can help prevent any skin irritation caused by the adhesive. Your stoma nurse will probably first recommend a spray as they are easier to apply. If you do use a cream, apply a thin layer to the peristomal skin, allow the cream to sink in and dry before attaching your bag. It is important to only use a small amount of cream as using too much can prevent your bag from sticking.



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

These are seals that mould around 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.



Top tips for skin irritations

Some of our experienced ostomates offer up their best advice when it comes to clearing up skin irritations around the stoma.

It is important to speak to your stoma nurse for advice before implementing any of these tips.



Gaviscon liquid

It may sound strange but this heartburn medication can also calm sore peristomal skin. The liquid has an alkaline base to neutralise acid and can soothe any redness and reduce itching.

Calamine lotion

Calamine lotion is well known to be a good soother during an outbreak of chickenpox but this lotion can also help cool and soothe red and irritated peristomal skin. Simply apply a small amount onto the skin around the stoma and leave to dry. Once the lotion has dried you can then reapply your bag.





Aloe vera

Aloe vera is a plant extract that is usually used to cool sunburn and reduce redness. This natural ointment can easily be found in your local chemists or some supermarkets and can be used to help cool down irritated skin. Again, apply a small amount to the skin around the stoma, allow the cream or ointment to dry and then reapply your bag. Make sure that you are not allergic to aloe vera or related plants before applying.

Sudocrem

Most of us will have a tub of this antiseptic cream around the house to treat any scrapes, cuts or as a nappy cream. Apply a small amount around the stoma and this cream can soothe any irritation, heal any sore areas and put a protective layer between your skin and bag to prevent any further soreness.

Make sure you allow the cream to dry before reapplying your bag.



Air time

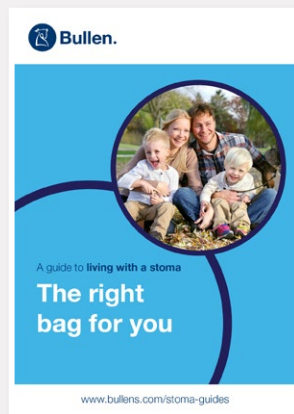
If you are able to, remove your bag for a small portion of your day to allow your skin to breathe and recover. It is a good idea to have some dry wipes and a small refuse bag handy in case your stoma becomes active.

All guides in our series...

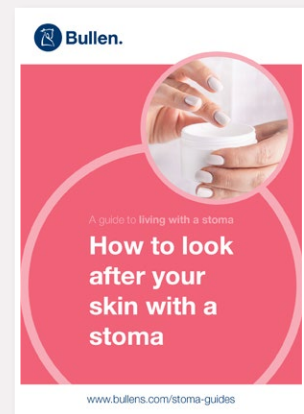
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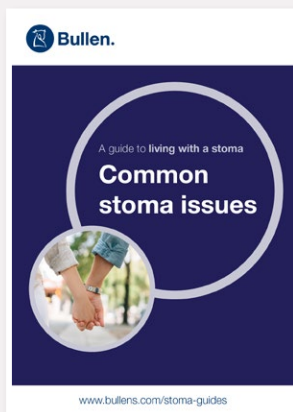
The definitive guide to living with a Stoma (includes all guides)



The right bag for you



How to look after your skin with a stoma



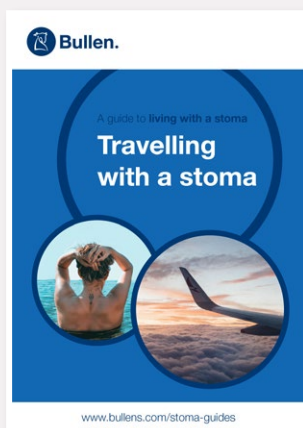
Common stoma issues



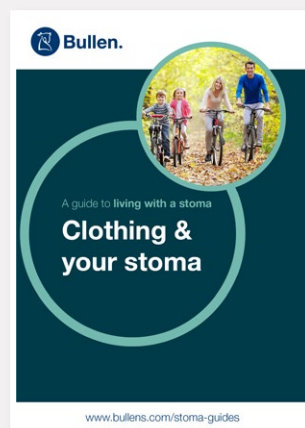
Where to get help and support for your stoma



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