



Bullen.

A guide to **living with a stoma**


Where to get help & support for your stoma



www.bullens.com/stoma-guides



Contents

- 01** Booking an appointment with your stoma nurse
 - 01** Your stoma supplier advisor
 - 02** Support groups
 - 04** Mental health and your stoma
 - 06** All guides in our series...
 - 07** Can we help?
 - 07** Useful links
- 

Where to get help and support for your stoma



Booking an appointment with your stoma nurse

If you have any concerns about your stoma or are suffering from any complications such as sore skin, excessive amounts of leaks or you suspect you may have a hernia then you can call your stoma nurse and they should be able to make you an appointment to visit them. If it has been several years since your last visit you may also need a referral from your GP for the appointment. Your first point of action should be to phone your local stoma nurses office and they will guide you on how to make an appointment.

Your stoma supplier advisor

For any small niggles like a small amount of irritation on your skin and not finding a comfortable fit with your bag then your stoma supplier advisor may be able to offer you help with any products or new bags that are available on the market. They may also be able to offer you some advice on who to visit if you are looking for any stoma support wear on prescription.



Support groups

At times having a stoma can feel like an isolating experience and it can be helpful to talk to others who understand what you are going through and share stories and tips on how to navigate life with a stoma.



With the digital age it is now easier than ever to join a stoma support group and there are various closed groups on Facebook that you can join and talk to others about living with your condition.

The three stoma patient charities in the UK are Colostomy UK support group, The Ileostomy & Internal Pouch Support Group (IA) and The Urostomy Association. The Ileostomy & Internal Pouch Support Group (IA) has forums on their website and the Urostomy Association has a members only Facebook group. There are many other Facebook groups that are usually run by other patients with a stoma or local support groups. Remember, that the information provided on these sites do not come from a clinical source, they are based on other patients experiences and opinions. It is important to always seek advice from your stoma nurse before acting on any information supplied by other patients.



You may also find there is support on different social media sites and find like-minded communities on Twitter and Instagram too. Charities like Bowel Cancer UK have large communities who all chat on Instagram and Twitter.

Please remember that you are a vulnerable person online and not everyone is who they say they are. Keep yourself safe by not revealing any details such as your address and date of birth. Do not give or receive any money or valuable items and avoid private messages with people you don't know well. We advise that groups are usually more suitable for those over 16 years old. If you have any concerns then report these to a group admin. It is your responsibility to keep yourself safe online.

If you prefer meeting people face-to-face or don't have internet access then there are several stoma support groups across the UK that meet up regularly. [Colostomy UK](http://www.colostomyuk.org), [Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association](http://www.iasupport.org) and [Urostomy Association](http://www.urostomyassociation.org.uk) all have a list of selected local groups across the UK on their websites. Contact the charities directly for further information.



Colostomy UK

www.colostomyuk.org

Helpline: 0800 328 4257 (24 hours a day)
info@colostomyuk.org



Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association

www.iasupport.org

Freephone: 0800 018 4724
info@iasupport.org



Urostomy Association

www.urostomyassociation.org.uk

Telephone: 01386 430140
info@urostomyassociation.org.uk

Mental health and your stoma

Having stoma surgery doesn't just change you physically, it can also change you emotionally and this outlook may be positive or negative depending on your experiences. Some people with a stoma may find it difficult to come to terms with their surgery and their new physical appearance and may need further support.



Firstly, remember that it is ok to have down days or not feel ok with the experience you have gone through. There are ways to manage these feelings though.

It is important that if you are experiencing feelings of anxiety or depression and you feel that you are struggling to manage these that you visit your GP as they can help you with either self help tips, medication or refer you for counselling sessions to help you navigate your way through your thoughts.

Symptoms of anxiety include



- Feeling restless
- A churning feeling in your stomach
- Feeling sick
- Feeling light headed or dizzy
- Faster breathing and a thumping heartbeat
- Sweating or hot flushes
- Insomnia

Symptoms of depression include



- Feeling down, upset or tearful
- Feeling agitated or restless
- Feeling guilty, worthless or down on yourself
- Feeling isolated
- Feeling suicidal
- Not being able to sleep or sleeping more than usual
- Eating more or less than usual
- Losing concentration

Mind, the mental health charity have a wealth of resources and information about how to manage your mental health conditions. It is worth visiting their website www.mind.org.uk or if you want to chat you can call them on **0300 123 3393** or text **86463**.

Self care is a great starting point and is important for your mental health too. This could be something as simple as treating yourself, even if it something small like your favourite coffee, take the time to pamper yourself or remove yourself from the stresses of your day with activities such as meditation, colouring or a puzzle.

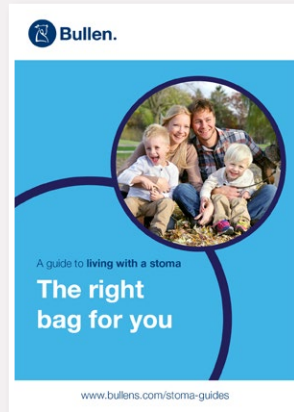
There are also some great apps available such as [Calm](#) and [Headspace](#) that can help you with specific moods such as if your feeling anxious, struggling with sleep or just feeling stressed.

All guides in our series...

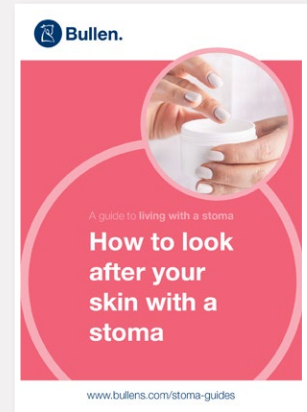
www.bullens.com/stoma-guide



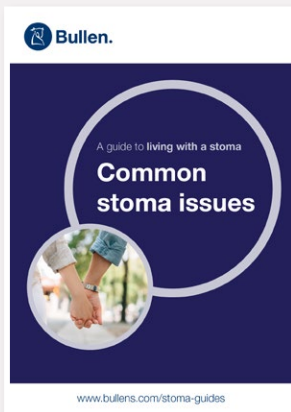
The definitive guide to living with a Stoma (includes all guides)



The right bag for you



How to look after your skin with a stoma



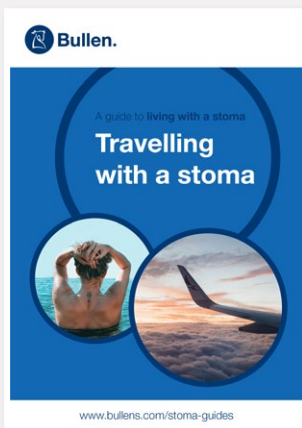
Common stoma issues



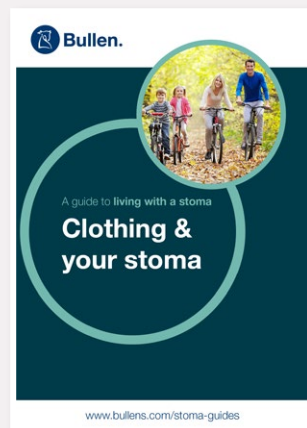
Where to get help and support for your stoma



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