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A guide to **living with a stoma**

Guide to diet & exercise after a stoma surgery



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Guide to diet & exercise after stoma surgery

What can I eat and drink after stoma surgery?

What to eat and drink post stoma surgery can be very confusing and there is a lot of information out there on what the 'rules' are for eating and drinking. The truth is everyone's tolerances are different and that there aren't any do's and don'ts when it comes to food. There is some general advice that you can choose to follow but normally it is recommended not to limit your food groups and only eliminate a food if you suffer any issues with it. For most, if you have a colostomy then your digestion will be near normal as before, unless you suffer from any surgical complications such as adhesions. If you have an ileostomy then you may need to be more aware of your nutrition and hydration levels.

It is important that you seek any nutritional advice from your stoma nurse, dietician or consultant.

Your diet straight after surgery



Many hospitals now follow an 'enhanced recovery programme', which includes encouraging patients to eat and drink as soon as possible after surgery and get up and move around. There is evidence to suggest that becoming mobile and getting back to your normal diet straight after your surgery encourages your bowel to heal and start functioning.

The myths and facts surrounding 'no-go' foods

You may have heard people talk about or have read online what someone with a stoma can and can't eat. We bust some of the common myths surrounding food and nutrition...



You can't eat raw vegetables, nuts and salads

It is not usually necessary to restrict your intake from these food groups. They are a good source of fibre and essential vitamins and minerals. Sometimes you may be advised to avoid high fibre foods if you are straight out of surgery or experiencing a 'flare' if you have inflammatory bowel disease. Your consultant or dietician will advise if you need to alter your diet.

You should avoid spicy foods

Spices are a good way to flavour your food and they also have a variety of health benefits. If you enjoyed eating spicy food prior to your stoma, there is no reason why you can't enjoy spicy food post surgery. It is all down to your individual tolerance.



You should avoid fizzy drinks

Although there are no nutritional benefits in drinking fizzy drinks, there is no reason why you can't enjoy them occasionally as part of a healthy, balanced diet. Some people may experience excess wind after consuming a fizzy drink.

It is difficult to eat in a restaurant with a stoma?

Most restaurants will happily cater for those who have any specific dietary requirements so finding something you can eat and drink shouldn't be a problem. Most people will find that once they recover from stoma surgery that they can enjoy a healthy and varied diet. If you feel nervous or anxious about finding a toilet when out, it can help to plan your trip in advance and call the restaurant ahead to answer any questions you may have.



On the next page are examples of foods that may alter alter your output. Remember, that this is only a general guide and not everyone will experience any side effects from different foods. These are not relevant for someone with a urostomy.

Foods that thicken your output

If you are suffering from loose stool and you are looking for foods that help thicken up your output then the below food groups may help:



- Jelly babies
- Marshmallows
- Bananas
- Rice
- Pasta
- Mashed potato
- Toast
- Porridge
- Peanut butter
- Apple sauce

Foods that loosen your output

These food groups are more known to have a laxative effect and cause loose stools. If you are suffering from diarrhoea, look to see if you are eating any of the food groups below in high quantities.



- Fruits, vegetables and salads
- Alcohol
- Fizzy drinks
- Chocolate
- Fruit juice
- Fish
- Spicy food
- Nuts
- Caffeine
- High fibre food such as bran
- Foods high in saturated fat/processed or fast foods

Foods that can cause excess wind

If you suffer from excess wind, it can help to limit foods that are known to produce excess gas, which include:



- Onions
- Garlic
- Fizzy drinks
- Fish
- Beans and pulses
- Cucumber
- Peas
- Kale, broccoli, cauliflower, sprouts, cabbage
- Alcohol
- Chewing gum

Avoiding dehydration with an ileostomy



If you have an ileostomy and you have had your colon removed then it can be difficult to maintain a good level of hydration as it is your colon that absorbs fluid back into the body. It is important that as well as being hydrated that your body has the right balance of electrolytes (vitamins, minerals, salts etc) and water alone is not always enough to maintain this. A good way to replace these is by drinking rehydration sachets that are designed for after a bout of diarrhoea such as Dioralyte as these replace the salts and minerals needed by the body.

You should discuss with your stoma care nurse or surgeon before you start taking Dioralyte or St Mark's Solution.



St Mark's Solution

There is also a way to make your own rehydration drink and this is known as St Mark's Solution. This is a specially formulated drink which is high in salt to help your body absorb fluid and reduce losses from your stoma.



The electrolyte mix needs to be made up freshly every day. To do this you need to measure out the following powders:

- 20g (six level 5ml spoonfuls) of Glucose
- 2.5g (one heaped 2.5ml spoonful) of Sodium Bicarbonate (baking soda)
- 3.5g (one level 5 ml spoonful) of Sodium Chloride (salt)

This needs to be dissolved in 1litre of cold tap water. It is recommended that you drink 1litre of the electrolyte mix each day. You can buy the ingredients (powders) from any pharmacy and some supermarkets or you can obtain them on prescription from your GP. They are cheaper to buy than to get through a prescription if you pay prescription charges.

Exercise and fitness with a stoma

Getting back into exercise - where to start

Firstly it is important to check with your doctor that it is safe for you exercise after your surgery. It is best to avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for the first 12 weeks post surgery but it doesn't mean that you can't be active. Gentle exercise will help improve blood flow throughout the body and this in turn will help to promote healing.



Walking

Going for walks around your local area is a good place to start post surgery. You could begin by walking for 30 minutes each day and then build up from there. Not only is walking good for you physically but the fresh air will help to clear your mind and boost your mood.

Swimming

Swimming is another good exercise for someone with a stoma to begin with. It's a good overall cardiovascular exercise that works all muscle groups but the water offers you extra support. It is perfectly safe to swim with a stoma bag. If you are worried about your bag leaking or falling off in the water then you could add flange extenders around the edges to help you feel more secure. Stoma bags are designed to withstand water so you shouldn't experience any problems.





Gardening

Once you're feeling well then getting back into the garden is a great form of exercise and works many of the muscle groups. It's a good idea to wear support when you are gardening and to do some little and often to avoid injuring yourself.

Pilates and Yoga

These two types of classes are very good at rebuilding your core strength and your balance. Yoga also has an element of relaxation to it and promotes overall wellness and a sense of calm and will help to improve anyone suffering with a low mood.

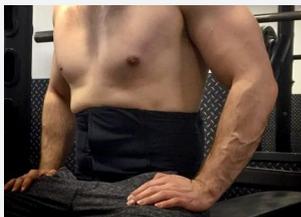


Exercises that can help strengthen your core and prevent a hernia

Colostomy UK have published a guide with a range of exercises that you can perform to help strengthen your back and stomach muscles and improve your posture and core. Performing these exercises regularly could also help to prevent a hernia from developing. [Click here](#) for more information on these exercises.

Wearing support during exercise

Once you are fully recovered from your surgery there's no reason why you can't get back to all the activities you loved before, whether they were team sports, visiting the gym or dance classes. It is important to have the right support and protection for your stoma if you are doing any exercise.



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.



(www.respond.co.uk)

Stoma guard

These are a protective shield or cup that fits over your stoma and are particularly useful if you play contact sports. They usually attach to a stoma belt.

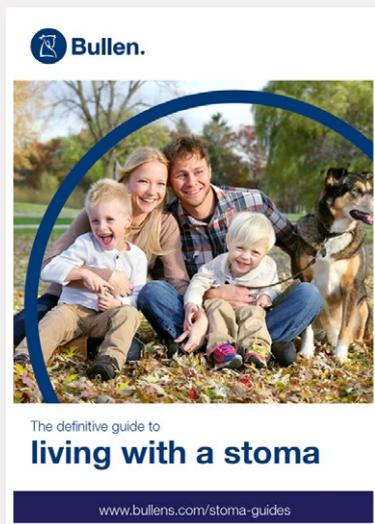
Chair yoga sessions



Colostomy UK are committed to getting ostomates back into exercise with their active ostomates programme and one of the things they do is offer chair yoga at a variety of ostomy events up and down the UK. This is a really gentle form of exercise suitable for all ostomates of all abilities. To find out where there next chair yoga session is, contact Colostomy UK.

All guides in our series...

www.bullens.com/stoma-guide



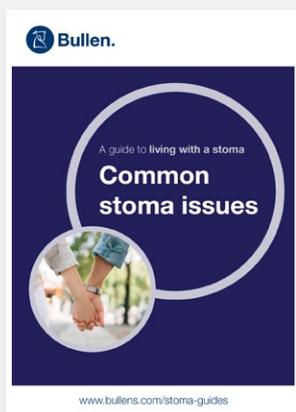
The definitive guide to living with a Stoma (includes all guides)



The right bag for you



How to look after your skin with a stoma



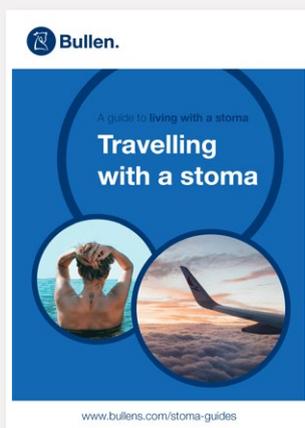
Common stoma issues



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