

# Basic Ostomy Care Tips

Your surgeon and your WOCN – wound ostomy care nurse – are your best resources for issues related to your ostomy. In addition, there are many local and regional ostomy associations that provide support and resources. Local chapters may be found at the United Ostomy Associations of America website - <http://www.ostomy.org/>. The Visitor's Program is particularly helpful for new ostomates.

## The Appliance (faceplate plus bag or pouch)

- Wash your hands before and after changing or emptying your pouch.
- Change your pouch twice a week or every 3-4 days.
- Empty your pouch when it is about 1/3 full of stool or gas. *Do not let it overfill!*
- If you regularly pass a large amount of gas into your pouch, consider using an appliance with a built-in filter.
- If you wear a “cut to fit” style appliance, have it cut and ready before taking off your old one.
- Keep an extra appliance (cut and ready) with you at all times.
- Keep your appliances in a cool, dry place.



## The Skin

- Check the skin with each appliance change. Look for sores, open areas, and redness. If you notice these or develop itching or pain, notify your WOCN or physician.
- Cleanse the skin with water and mild soap. Avoid soaps with perfumes or moisturizers. Do not scrub or abrade.
- Do not use lotions, powders, baby wipes, alcohol, steroid ointments or sprays unless recommended by your WOCN or physician.
- Remember, less is more!



## Daily Activities

- You can shower or bathe with your appliance on.
- During warmer weather, your wear time may decrease due to heat and sweating. Therefore, you may need to change your appliance more frequently.
- You do not need to rinse your pouch after emptying. If it is difficult to remove stool from the bag, try using a lubricating deodorant.
- If you are having trouble with leakage or keeping your appliance on, please contact your WOCN.

If any questions or concerns regarding your ostomy, please call Danni Davis, NP, CWON in the Colon and Rectal Surgery Clinic at Rush at 312-942-7088.

Patient information materials developed in the Section of Colon and Rectal Surgery at Rush University Medical Center. The information contained in this brochure is believed to be accurate; however, questions about your individual health should be referred to your physician.

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