



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

If errors are noted in your name or address, please bring these to my attention. If you know of someone to add or delete from our mailing list, please notify me. I can be reached at work, 325-670-4302, or by e-mail, callen@hendrickhealth.org. We are now sending our newsletter electronically to those who request it be sent that way. **Please send me your e-mail address if you would like a link to the newsletter.**

If you know of someone who would be a good speaker at one of our meetings, please contact us.

– Charlotte Allen, MSN, RN-BC, CWOCN



LAST MEETING

For the August meeting, even though we had a small group due to the heavy rain earlier in the day, we still had a lively discussion and enjoyed ice cream and eclairs.

NEXT MEETING

For the next support group meeting on September 10, a pharmacy student from TTUHSC will come and discuss dietary changes with an ostomy. Please come and support this student!

Everyone is welcome. Bring your spouse or a friend or come alone.

Mark your calendars: We will NOT have a meeting October 8 due to unavailability of WOC nurses.

We meet in the Diabetes Center at 1742 Hickory St. (corner of Hickory St. and N. 18th St.) at 6:30 p.m. Hope to see you there!

CONTACT US

For more information, please contact us at 670-4302.

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Our Ostomy Gives Us Power! Ostomy Visitor talks clothing and embracing life

By Elyn Mantell

As president of our Ostomy Support Group in Summit, New Jersey, I have met many future ostomates over the years since I have had mine, and we have met in various places, depending upon their health, etc. The one that stands out in my mind is a meeting at a shopping mall a few weeks prior to her ostomy, with Carol, a woman who wanted not only to see the stoma for herself but to understand how it would fit into her life. She loves clothes, as do I, and was frightened she would need not only to purchase a new wardrobe but to change her style of dress.

The best way to show my stoma to her was to go into a fitting room in a store. We brought in some clothes that were of interest to her, and I proceeded to try them on, demonstrating how my stoma (Lily, as I have named her) would fit neatly and snugly under the clothing. I was reminded that as soon as I had my ostomy four years ago, I gave away all of my belts and fitted pants. I was certain I would never wear them again, despite being told that wasn't true. To the contrary, I saw pictures of great-looking women with ostomies online in tight jeans with belted waists. It was just too hard to imagine myself wearing belts and jeans with a pouch, and since these women were not in front of me, I couldn't ask them "how do they manipulate their appliance to be comfortable and secure?"

Knowing it would have been invaluable to me to actually see an abdomen in clothing, I wanted Carol to have the proper introduction to dealing with her wardrobe. We laughed as I told her of my quest to replace my jeans and belts over the years – since I have learned I can wear almost anything! In truth, my "go-to" outfit is most frequently leggings and tunics, dresses and full-legged pants with a tank, covered by cropped tops. I am what is known as "funky and fashion-forward dressing," as I learned when I was the fashion trainer for Macy's years ago, and happily, my style hasn't had to change due to Lily, who requires a high-output pouch that is so long, and I am so short, that it rests on my thigh! Wide-eyed, but a little more able to envision her own "Lily," Carol and I left and grabbed some tea at the nearest Starbucks. We sat and talked about the changes she anticipated and feared, and then she asked me what I really, very truthfully, feel about being an ostomate? Without missing a beat, I very simply said POWERFUL! I told her that as I look around at the many people shopping, I know I have a secret; and that secret is that I am strong, a survivor and I can help others. Knowing that gives me the most positive feeling, and I am grateful, and want to share it!

I have checked on and even visited Carol as she recovered from her surgeries – since there were a few. Sadly, there is no straight line for any of us, and depending upon the reason for the ostomy, recovery can have many twists and turns. My own led me to need to spend weeks in the hospital and then a rehab facility. But she is improving daily and gaining back her strength and determination. I know she will join our support group or another closer to her home. I also know that before too long, she, too, will be accomplishing her goal of like me, being trained to become an Ostomy Visitor...to meet with and help others learn how to cope with their ostomy, and how POWERFUL they truly are, as well!

Exercise your fitness options with these helpful tips

by Wil Walker, MBA, BSN, RN, WOC Nurse Manager, Clinical Education, Hollister Incorporated

When is it safe to start exercising after ostomy surgery?

Stoma surgery is a major event that should not be underestimated. The first few weeks or even months following the operation may be difficult as you adjust gradually to having a stoma. The easiest and most effective form of exercise can be walking. It's best to check with your healthcare provider to determine the right time for you to begin exercising, as every person can be different.

I'm nervous about doing sit-ups and crunches because I have heard that I could develop a hernia. Are there precautions I can take to avoid this?

There may be a risk you will develop a hernia around your stoma that can be associated with straining or heavy lifting during strenuous abdominal activity. You can help prevent the development of a peristomal hernia by taking certain precautions. Keep your weight in check and talk with your surgeon before resuming any abdominal exercises.

How will I know that I am sufficiently hydrated?

One good sign of being well hydrated is passing clear or straw-colored urine throughout the day. Dehydration can be a concern for overachievers, whether they have stomas or not. Drink plenty of fluids at every opportunity to avoid problems with your stoma and with dehydration.

I am still very tired after my surgery. What kind of exercise can I do to start out?

Begin by walking in your house. Special videos and DVDs, or even just some invigorating music, will help set the pace. You might practice going up and down stairs to increase stamina and endurance. But, if weather permits, walk outside in the fresh air to help boost your physical and mental spirits!

I love swimming, but I'm nervous that my pouch will become loose in the water. Is there anything I can do to make sure this doesn't happen?

This is a valid concern for a person with an ostomy. To determine how your pouch might perform while swimming,

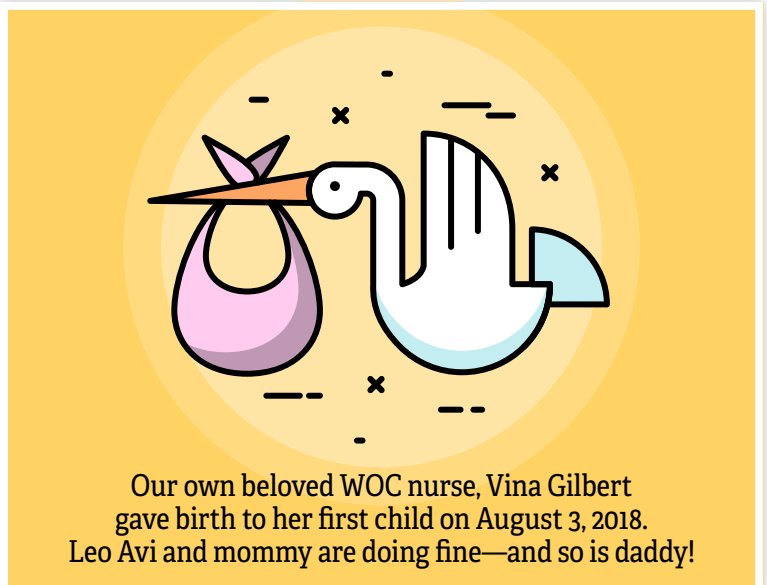
it is recommended to "test" your pouch. Sit in bath water for a while and assure yourself that the seal stays snug and leak-free.

I ran my first marathon after ostomy surgery and little red marks appeared on my stoma. What are these and should I be concerned?

With a lot of running, little red marks similar to mouth ulcers might appear on the stoma because of rubbing or chafing. They should heal quickly and disappear with rest. If they don't resolve, contact your healthcare professional.

When I exercise I perspire a lot. Is there anything I can use to avoid chafing around my pouch?

If your pouch fits properly and is not too long, it should not touch or rub against the skin. Empty your pouch before any strenuous activity as well to decrease the weight of your pouch. Consider using a pouch that has a comfort panel to avoid the pouch film from rubbing against your skin. Have a question that wasn't answered here? Check out this helpful new brochure from Hollister Incorporated. Living with an Ostomy: Sports & Fitness.



P: Photos

I was getting ready to go on a TV show, and the woman touching up my makeup relayed the following story about her husband. He was just arriving for this first colonoscopy. As he walked into the doctor's office to prepare for the test, he noticed photos of various colons hanging on the wall. When the doctor came in, my husband asked, "Do you recognize anyone by their faces anymore?"

Used with Permission from Brenda Elsagher from: I'd Like to Buy a Bowel Please: Ostomy A to Z, www.livingandlaughing.com

Brenda has faced her experience (of having a colostomy) with honesty and humor and has shared her story across the nation as a keynote speaker.

**New from The Phoenix:
Ask Doctor Rafferty
Sex after Surgery**

Dear Dr. Rafferty,

I had ileostomy surgery three weeks ago. I am doing pretty well, considering it was major surgery. I was told that my sexual function might be “diminished, impaired or severely affected” by my surgeon. I’m nervous that there was some damage, but I can’t tell if everything is OK or not. How do I know if everything still works? When can I resume sexual activity? S.U.

Dear S.U.,

Without knowing more details, it is impossible to say when it is safe for you to resume sexual activity. Typically, it is recommended to avoid sex and strenuous activity for about a month after ostomy surgery to allow wounds to heal properly. The nerves to bladder and sexual function are intimately associated with the rectum. When the rectum is surgically removed, these tiny nerves can be injured. Injury is a bit more common after pelvic radiation combined with surgery. Men will notice a change in erectile and ejaculatory function shortly after surgery if these nerves have been affected, but not all notice a change and not all changes are permanent. Many men notice a return to near-normal function after several months. Women may notice no significant change in sexual function following removal of the rectum, unless the angle of the vagina is significantly different.

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Ostomy Awareness Day/World Ostomy Day

The UOAA has announced October 6, 2018, as Ostomy Awareness Day and World Ostomy Day. This year’s theme is Speaking Out Changes Lives. Consider speaking to someone else about living with an ostomy—how it is a lifesaving and sometimes life-enhancing surgery. Many people haven’t a clue what an ostomy is, or if they have heard about an ostomy, it is usually in a negative light. Let’s spread the word that there is life after ostomy surgery! There may be someone out there considering ostomy surgery and if they hear from you about the positive effects of this surgery, it may help them in their decision. Let’s speak out!