



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, 325-670-4312, or by e-mail, vgilbert@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.

– Vina Gilbert, MSN, RN, CWOCN



LAST MEETING

For the December 10 meeting, we had a potluck with delicious finger foods and a gift exchange. This was a fun time. We exchanged gifts using a fun dice game to make it more exciting.

NEXT MEETING

Start off the New Year by attending the January 14 support group meeting. Please plan on attending as we discuss future plans for the support group. We want to set this time aside to hear from you! Topics to discuss include adjusting meeting times and frequency of meetings.

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 670-4312.

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Thoughts about Ostomy Surgery: To Tell or to Remain Silent

By Ellen Poulson

According to some recent statistics from UOAA, there are 750,000 to one million people in the United States who have had ostomy surgery.

No one wanted it, and no one asked to become very ill. But this is life on Earth as human beings. Illness comes, bodies become sick and weakened with various problems from cancer to ulcerative colitis. Fortunately, there are some well-trained medical folks who can operate, remove the source of trouble and create a new way to live. Nurses and WOC nurses are there to help as we find our way back to health. All of these patients now have a new plumbing system in place, requiring an ileostomy, a colostomy, urostomy or other types of ostomy surgery. How wonderful that they survived!

The problem is that no one wants to talk about it--- a miracle that kept them alive! No, it gets laughed at. Jokes are made about little old ladies who “wear a bag.” Good Heavens, this wonderful surgery is done for little babies, too. They are still cute whether they are wearing a surgical appliance or not. It seems that people smirk and feel embarrassed about anything mentioned in the digestive tract that is located beyond the stomach. New ostomates share those feelings in private until they can meet with a group chapter of the UOAA in cities and towns all across America.

If there was more acceptance about this surgery and the words used– such as ostomy, colon, colostomy, surgical appliance or pouch - rather than just the term “bag,” then acceptance could begin. Many can remember Betty Ford, the presidents’ wife, who came out in the media and said she had surgery for breast cancer. At that time, many people were not openly saying either the word “breast” or “cancer.” Now it is openly discussed, and all the better for more people whose lives are saved through having open discussions.

Personally, I hope for the day when I no longer remain silent about my ileostomy which saved my life 40 years ago. Since then I recovered good health, have lead organizations, watched my children become mothers and enjoyed playing tennis, swimming and other sports - and most people know nothing about my miracle. Early on, I mentioned it to a few folks who seemed so uncomfortable or reviled by the thought that I decided not to bother to tell. One person argued that there is no way a person could live without a colon - and treated me as a misinformed ninny. It became easier to remain silent.

But now, it is time for the world to know how the medical profession is saving lives through great surgery, and there are personnel to help with recovery and groups to meet with to learn how to live again, happy and free from illness and pain.

Editor’s note: After writing this as “anonymous,” the author chose to use her name. Visit www.ostomy.org to get involved with UOAA advocacy and ostomy awareness activities.

Learn How to Spot Peristomal Skin Irritation and Damage

After your ostomy surgery, your healthcare team likely taught you how to care for your peristomal skin and what it should look like when it is healthy. Ideally, it should be intact without irritation, rash or redness. The skin around your stoma should look just like the skin on the other side of your abdomen, or anywhere else on your body, free of redness, irritation or damage. Healthy skin should be the rule, not the exception.

However, if your peristomal skin is irritated or damaged, there may be some signs of a peristomal skin complication (PSC), such as:

1. Discomfort, itching, soreness or even pain around the stoma
2. Recurrent leakage under your pouching system or skin barrier
3. Excessive bleeding of your stoma. (It's normal for your stoma to slightly bleed after you wash it, but the bleeding should resolve quickly.)
4. A bulge in the skin around your stoma
5. Skin color changes from normal pink or red to pale, bluish purple or black
6. A rash around the stoma that is red or red with bumps. (This may be due to a skin infection or sensitivity or even leakage.)
7. Wart-like, pimple-like or blister-like bumps under the skin barrier. (This type of irritation can happen any time, even if you've used the same product for months or years)
8. Any type of wound or scratch on the peristomal skin

Peristomal Skin Complications — Potential Causes and What To Do

Irritated and damaged peristomal skin can occur for a variety of reasons. It can be caused by anything from a poor-fitting pouching system, to frequent skin barrier changes, to an allergic reaction to anything that contacts the skin, such as soaps or products used to prepare the peristomal skin. Some studies report up to 75 percent of people with an ostomy experience a PSC.* Although it is a common issue, it should not be ignored.

If you experience any signs of a PSC, contact your stoma care nurse. You should work with your healthcare team to determine the exact cause and the appropriate solution.

** Rapp CG, L Richbourg, JM Thorne. Difficulties Experienced by the Ostomate After Hospital Discharge. JWOCN. 2007;34(1):70-79.*

Editor's note: This educational article is from one of our digital sponsors of the UOAA, Hollister Incorporated.

Hollister, Inc., has developed a tool that can be used for identifying and treating peristomal skin irritation.

Start using the tool today!

Find the guide on the WOCN Society website at psag-consumer.wocn.org.

See the next page for information on this tool that may help with peristomal skin irritation.

Happy New Year

P: Photos Used with permission from Brenda Elsagher from: *Id Like to Buy a Bowel Please: Ostomy A to Z*, www.livingandlaughing.com

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 his 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?"

O: Old Joke

It's not so bad having a colostomy. I just can't find shoes to match my bag.

I Am the New Year

By Anonymous

UOAA Update, January 2015

I Am the New Year

I am unused, unspotted, without blemish.
I stretch before you three hundred and sixty-five days long.
I will present each day in its turn, a new leaf
in the book of life
For you to place upon it your imprint.

I Am the New Year

Each hour of every day, I will give you sixty minutes
That have never known the use of man.
White and pure, I present them;
It remains for you to fill them with sixty jeweled seconds of
Love, hope, endeavor and patience

I Am the New Year

I am coming -
But once past, I can never be recalled.
Make me your best!

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Your link to understanding skin health: Here's how the Peristomal Skin Assessment Guide for Consumers can help

Is your skin irritated or weepy under your pouching system's skin barrier? Wondering what causes it and how to resolve it? The Peristomal Skin Assessment Guide for Consumers may be able to help. It's an easy-to-use digital tool designed to help identify common skin problems through actual photographs, suggest next steps for care or management, and appropriately prompt individuals to seek advice from a Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurse (WOCN) for additional support.

The original guide, sponsored by Hollister Incorporated, was developed for use by clinicians only. But it soon became clear that it would benefit people living with ostomies. The same development team put their heads together and created a new version for consumers.

"Up to 75 percent of people with ostomies may experience a peristomal skin issue but don't know it's a problem and don't seek help," states Karen Spencer, director of Global Clinical Education Ostomy, Hollister Incorporated. "So having photos of what's normal and what's not, is a good idea."

Since its launch in June, more than 5,486 people have accessed the guide from across the globe - the U.S., Canada, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Brazil. And the numbers are growing every day. "Hollister believes in helping people with ostomies adjust to living life with an ostomy," says Spencer.

Start using the tool today!
Find the guide on the WOCN Society website at psag-consumer.wocn.org.