

I'm Having Problems with my Stoma Bags

What Do I Do?

Editor's Note: Advice given in this article applies to all problems with ostomy appliances.

We all have problems now and again, even those of us who have had our stoma for a long time. I have had mine for over thirty years, but very occasionally something goes wrong.

The first step is to look at what the problem is. For example, is the bag leaking where the flange joins on to the skin, is there a problem with the bag itself, is your skin getting sore?

If the urine is leaking through under the flange, this can be caused by a number of different issues. If it is happening with some frequency, then the best course of action would be to ask your stomal therapist for an appointment, as it may be that your stoma or skin surface has changed shape slightly, or that the bag you are using is not the best one for you. The same course of action applies if you are getting sore skin. Your stomal therapist will be able to help you find the best solution.

However, it may be that there is a problem with the bag itself – perhaps the tap is not closing properly or there is a weld that is not completely sealed. Having an appliance that has a manufacturing fault is not common, but it is possible for the odd thing to slip through the net.

If this happens to you, it should be reported to the manufacturer and to your association who issues your supplies.

Unfortunately, the result of having a faulty appliance is often that you are wet. So first things first, change the appliance for one out of a different box, if you can.

Next, try to see what the fault is. If there is a split, this should be fairly easily seen, but if there is just a pin-prick hole, then it can be quite difficult to find out exactly where it is.

Unfortunately, manufacturers cannot accept used pouches or night drainage bags, even if they have been thoroughly cleaned out, so either make a note or draw a diagram of the appliance, noting what the fault was and where it occurred before you dispose of the appliance in the usual way.

Next, find the box that the pouch or night drainage bag came out of. This will have the manufacturer's product code and batch number on it. These tell the manufacturer where and when the product was made. Without these numbers, it is very difficult to investigate a complaint, so please don't throw the box away until you have used the last pouch from it.

Now you are ready to contact the manufacturer of the appliance. You will find the toll-free telephone number listed in the individual company advertising in the Ostomy Australia journal, or contact your own association. It is possible that the manufacturer will ask you to return the whole box of appliances, along with any diagrams/notes that you have made about the fault. If this will leave you short of appliances, do ask for a replacement box to be sent to you.

Some faults that can occur include:

- faulty taps
- holes in the pouch

- flanges with faults
- faults between the flange and the pouch
- missing parts from night drainage bags
- night drainage bags being withdrawn from the market with little or no notice
- changes being made to products without warning

Most urostomates are sent replacement products by the manufacturer, and in most cases the issue is dealt with satisfactorily.

If you have any issues, it is only by you and your association working closely with the manufacturers and suppliers when you have a problem that the occurrence of faulty appliances and other issues is kept to an absolute minimum.

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