

## ***FOCUS ON UROSTOMY***

**Definition:** A Urostomy or urinary diversion devised by Dr Bricker in 1950 is a surgically created opening in the abdomen that allows urine to pass directly out of the body. It is formed from a short segment of small intestine (*ileum*) that has been surgically removed and used as a conduit. The two ureters that carry urine from the kidneys are attached so they will empty through this new conduit. The other end of the ileal conduit is brought out through the abdominal wall and a stoma is created. Urine is produced by the kidneys continuously (*approximately 2 litres per day*) with intermittent contractions of the bowel segment (*called peristalsis*) forcing the urine to be discharged from the stoma in small spurts at regular intervals. Urostomies are the most complex of the three major types of ostomies and can present complex problems, but when they work right, they are winners. Remember an ostomy is a cure, not a disease.

Urostomies are formed for many reasons. In adults, the surgery is most often done to remove a cancerous bladder or in some instances can be the result of trauma following complications during or following childbirth. For people with spinal cord problems, urostomy may save someone from irreparable kidney damage. Interstitial Cystitis (*where the lining of the bladder is continuously inflamed*) is another reason for the surgery having to be performed. Sometimes after urostomy surgery the bladder may be left in place, but if the bladder is diseased, it is usually removed. Kidneys are most happy when they have lots of work to do, so drinking plenty of fluids is essential for urostomates to avoid damage to the kidneys caused by severe urinary infections. Drink plenty of fluids to keep urine clear and free from bacterial growth.

With the possible exception of work requiring heavy lifting, a urostomy should not interfere with work. People with urostomies are successful business people, teachers, carpenters, welders, etc.

Sexual function is influenced by the reason for which the urostomy is performed. The urostomy itself should not interfere with normal sexual activity or the ability to have children.

With a securely fitting appliance there is no reason to restrict participation in practically all types of sports, with caution advised in heavy contact sports.

**Night Drainage:** Most urostomates will find the use of a night drainage system to be beneficial to avoid the possibility of lying on a full pouch and also stop you having to get up at regular intervals through the night to empty the appliance. Urostomates who do not use a night drainage system also run a risk of the backing-up of urine into the conduit up to the kidneys, which can increase the incidences of urine infection. To avoid air in the night drainage system, leave a quantity of urine in the pouch before connecting the night bag, squeeze the urine through into the night bag and the body pouch will remain empty all night. Always place the night drainage bag in a bucket or large bowl as an extra security in case of leakage. Reusable night drainage bags must be washed thoroughly after each use to help lower the risk of introducing infection. White vinegar or diluted Canestan (*an antifungal and antibacterial Hygiene Laundry Rinse*) can be inserted using a syringe or small funnel, swirled around and flushed through using warm water.

**Urinary Tract Infections:** These are more common in Urostomates due to the fact that the valves at the ends of the ureters (*the tubes from the kidneys to the bladder*) are now missing, so backflow of urine up to the kidneys is more prevalent thus causing infections. The distance from the stoma to the kidneys is also markedly reduced after urostomy surgery giving any external bacteria a shortened route to the kidneys. Symptoms will develop rapidly and may include cloudy offensive smelling urine, elevated temperature, visible blood in the urine, nausea and or vomiting, low back pain and decreased urine output. It is important to get treatment for these infections as soon as possible to avoid admission to hospital and prevent permanent kidney damage. Yeast or fungal infections are more common during summer or when one perspires especially during physical exercise.

**Leaks:** Most urostomates will experience leakage at some time, more especially during warmer weather, but if leaks occur frequently something is wrong.

**Things to check could be as simple as:**

- changing the type of appliance used
- maybe you have had an increase or decrease in weight
- the stoma shape could have changed or the skin has not been dried properly before applying a new appliance
- an improper pouch angle
- the development of folds and creases in the surrounding skin
- not emptying the pouch frequently enough or the use of ageing appliances

**Some Simple Hints for the Urostomate:**

- Your urostomy is not sterile! Wash the stoma and surrounding skin with a mild soap and water and dry just as you do the rest of the body
- You can both bath and shower with your pouch off or on. Dry the skin carefully prior to re-applying your pouch
- Keep hairs around the stoma trimmed or shaved to ensure good adhesion of the appliance
- Train yourself to shut the tap/valve as soon as you have emptied the appliance to avoid the "wet leg feeling" shortly after
- Mucous shreds in the urine are normal and can be reduced by drinking extra fluids
- Drink plenty of fluids to keep urine clear and free from bacterial growth
- Cranberry, blackcurrant juice or yoghurt will help combat urinary odours, can help reduce the amount of mucous and increase the ph in the urine and help slow the frequency of infections
- Vitamin C taken according to the directions on the bottle may be helpful to acidify the urine as alkaline urine may irritate the skin

- Asparagus should be avoided by urostomates as it can produce a strong odour in the urine
- If you change the appliance first thing in the morning or 3 hours after fluid intake, there is less chance of it misbehaving as you do the change
- Empty your pouch when it is approximately one third full
- In hot weather, a cotton pouch cover may help prevent the development of a heat rash

*Reproduced by kind permission of Ostomy Australia magazine, July 2006, pp28 & 37*

*This article appeared in NZ Ostomate Magazine 1/2006 and the information is sourced from the Internet and various other publications.*