

Know About Blockage

UOAA UPDATE July 2010 via Sterling Area Ostomy Association 3/10

The small and large intestines are as different in function as are the arm and the leg. The primary function of the small intestine is to take nutrition from digested foods. The function of the large intestine is to absorb water out of the food residue. Consequently, there is a difference in the discharge from an ileostomy, a colostomy or a rectum.

This discharge from the small intestine, which functions on liquid material and moves contents forward quickly, is liquid and soft. In the large intestine, the contents are changed from liquid to solid, through the process absorbing water. The movement is much less rapid, and the discharge is solid or even hard.

Movement of the food mass through the small intestines is never more than a few hours. Movement through the large intestine frequently takes from 36 to 48 hours. Thus, when anything blocks the forward motion of the stream of the small intestine, an immediate chain of events is set up.

There is pain, then cramping. Later, if there is no forward motion, a backward motion of fluid causing vomiting. The most frequent cause of the onset of this chain of events is blockage at the ileostomy stoma.

Usually, this is precipitated by undigested food; a bean, pea, peanut, stringy vegetables, shrimp, lobster, coconut, raw vegetables or similar food.

The best way to handle a blockage is not to allow it to occur in the first place. This is done by chewing foods well and drinking plenty of water. However, if symptoms of blockage occur, notify your doctor and follow his/her advice. As blockages may arise from causes other than undigested food particles, observe the following two cautions:

1. Do not take any laxatives without your doctor's specific order; any laxative may cause additional complications and pain.
2. Do not take any medication for pain without your doctor's specific order. Pain medication may mask a symptom that the doctor needs to know about.

Urostomates must be sure to take particular precautions in order to prevent blockages. Where the ileum or colon are joined after a segment is removed to make the conduit, a stricture can occur which is not as extendible as the normal intestines.

Keep some grape juice and mineral oil around your home just in case. Some symptoms of a blockage can be relieved with a glass of white grape juice or a tablespoon of mineral oil. It can work wonders sometimes, even to the extent of loosening the blockage enough to pass.

Colostomy Hints

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Diet: There is no such thing as a colostomy diet. A colostomy is not an illness, so try to eat the same foods you have eaten and enjoyed in the past. If you are on a diet for a condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, of course you should stay on this diet. Foods can be acidic or alkaline, bland or spicy, laxative like or constipating. Individuals react differently to food. Try to return to your former normal diet; those foods which disagreed with you in the past may still do so. Chew well and see the effect of each food on your colostomy output.

To maintain good health, the body requires carbohydrates, proteins, fat, minerals and vitamins. Water is not nutritious but is absolutely necessary. Having a balanced diet is a fitting way for people to maintain good nutrition and keep bowel activity normal. Every day your body needs meats or fish, dairy foods, vegetables and fruits, cereals and bread and liquids.

If you wear a pouch all the time, you will suffer no embarrassment if something you eat produces an unexpected discharge. You will soon learn which foods produce gas or odor, which cause diarrhea and which are constipating. With this knowledge, you can regulate the bowel's behavior to a certain extent. You cannot prevent intestinal activity by not eating. An empty intestine produces gas. No matter what your plans might be, eat regularly, several times a day, with perhaps a small meal before going to bed at night. Your colostomy will function better for it.

Daily Life. Once you have recovered your health, you may continue a normal day's routine, as you did before surgery. A colostomy is not an impediment to most activity. When its care has been properly determined, it will not interfere with your daily schedule.

Work. Colostomates can do most jobs; however lifting can cause the stoma to herniate or prolapse, especially soon after surgery. A sudden blow in the appliance area could cause the faceplate to shift and cut the stoma. Still, there are some colostomates who do heavy lifting, such as firefighters, mechanics and truck drivers. Check with your doctor about your type of work. As with all surgery, it will take time for you to regain strength after the operation. A letter from your doctor to your employer may be helpful should your employer have doubts about what you can do.

Sometimes colostomates find that their employers think that the colostomy will keep them from doing their jobs. This also happens to some colostomates who are applying for new jobs. You should know your right to work is protected by parts of the US Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as well as by sections of your state laws. If you feel you are being unfairly treated because of your colostomy, call the UOAA office at 800.826.0826.

Hints

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Posture Matters! When you return from hospital you will be feeling sore and uncomfortable. You may be anxious about the front of your body getting bumped, or self-conscious about the stoma which can lead to a habit of hunching over to “guard” that area. Try to focus on keeping your head up and your back straight.

Walking Works! Don’t lie or sit all day. Walking helps restore lost muscle tone, gets your circulation going and just generally perks you up. Get up and walk several times a day.

Ten (new) Commandments for Ostomates

UOAA UPDATE July 2010 via Pittsburgh PA 10/09

1. Thou shall allow thyself to be sad, or angry, or depressed on occasion. Who said that you *always* have to have a good attitude!
2. Thou shall not let the above emotions become a way of life.
3. Thou shall seek help, education and support if thine unhappy emotions overcome thee.
4. Thou shall learn to care for thy ostomy. Letting others do it for you if you are physically able is a cop-out.
5. Thou shall seek out thy WOCNurse if thou art not satisfied with thine products.
6. Thou shall not hide thyself away. Get out and do the things you used to do. You can!!
7. Thou shall not be ashamed.
8. Thou shall cultivate a sense of humor about thine ostomy. There are worse things.
9. Thou shall set an example to the non-ostomy world. An example of triumph over adversity, courage over pity and pride over embarrassment.
10. Thou shall help other ostomates. Join your local UOAA group, donate money, and volunteer your time.

Words of Wisdom (?)

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- Remember, half the people you know are below average.
 - Depression is merely anger without enthusiasm.
 - The early bird may get the worm; but it’s the second mouse who gets the cheese in the trap.
 - Support Bacteria! They’re the only culture some people have.
 - A clear conscience is usually a sign of bad memory.
 - Hard work pays off in the future; but laziness pays off right now.
 - What happens if you get scared half to death - twice?
 - If the world didn’t suck, we’d all fall off!
 - Life isn’t like a box of chocolates. It’s more like a box of jalapenos, because what you do today may burn your butt tomorrow.
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Murphy's Lesser Known Laws

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- Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- He who laughs last, thinks the slowest.
- Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- Nothing is fool proof to a sufficiently talented fool.
- The 50-50-90 rule: anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there is a 90% probability you'll get it wrong.
- If you lined up all the cars in the world end to end, someone would be stupid enough to pass them, five or six at a time... on a hill...on a curve...in the fog.
- If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.
- A flashlight is a case for holding dead batteries.
- The shin bone is a device for finding furniture in a dark room.