

Discharge Instructions for Colostomy



You just had a procedure that required a colostomy. This is a life-saving procedure that involves removing or disconnecting part of your colon (large intestine). If your large intestine was diseased, your healthcare provider may have removed it. If it was injured, your healthcare provider may have disconnected it for a short time so that it can heal. After it heals, your healthcare provider may reconnect it. During a colostomy formation, your healthcare provider reroutes your colon through your abdominal wall. Stool and mucus can then pass out of your body through this opening, called a stoma. These are general guidelines for home care after a colostomy. Your healthcare provider will go over any information that is specific to your condition.

Home care

Suggestions for home care include the following:

- Take care of your stoma as directed. Your healthcare provider and ostomy nurse discussed how to do this with you before you left the hospital.
- If someone will be helping you recover, ask the medical team to instruct that person on ostomy care too.
- Don't lift anything more than 5 pounds until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Don't drive until after your first healthcare provider's appointment after your surgery.
- If you ride in a car for more than short trips, stop often to stretch your legs. This is to help prevent blood clots in the deep veins of your legs.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can expect to return to work. Most people can return to work within 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.
- Increase your activity slowly. Take short walks on a level surface.
- Wash your incision site with mild soap and water or just water and pat it dry.
- Check your incision every day for redness, drainage, swelling, or separation of the skin.
- Take your medicines exactly as directed. Don't skip doses.
- Don't take any over-the-counter medicine unless your healthcare provider tells you to do so.

Call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Lots of bleeding from your stoma. Your provider may advise you to get medical care right away or call 911.
- Blood in your stool. Depending on the amount, your provider may advise you to get medical care right away or call 911.
- Stool that's very hard
- No gas or stool
- Change in the color of your stoma
- Bulging skin around your stoma

- A stoma that looks like it's getting longer
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised by your provider
- Shaking chills
- Redness, swelling, bleeding, or fluid leaking from your incision
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Increased pain in the belly or around the stoma

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